

# *Self-Portrait of Christ*

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## *The Holy Shroud of Turin*

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*by*

EDWARD A. WUENSCHER, C.S.S.R., S.T.D.

Director of the Redemptorist Institute  
of Higher Studies, Rome

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## PREFACE

I BEG LEAVE to make a confession and to render a testimony. The nature of the subject I am about to treat justifies and demands it.

At one time I would not have taken a single step in order to have even a passing glimpse of the Shroud of Turin.

Men esteemed for their scholarship branded the Shroud as a forgery. It is a painting of the fourteenth century, they said, and it was fraudulently put forth as the winding-sheet of Christ with the imprints of His Body. For proof, they presented a sheaf of documents which were supposed to close the case forever.

The scholars also agreed that the hand of the forger betrays itself, inasmuch as the Shroud is in conflict with the Gospels, especially with John's account of the burial.

I accepted the verdict of the erudite.

This is my confession.

My testimony? I feel bound now to bear witness to the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin. This is the true winding-sheet of Christ. It bears the frontal and the dorsal imprints of His Body.

My conversion began when I saw original photographs of the Shroud.

These two life-size figures are infinitely more than the crude outline they appear to be. They have all the characteristics of a negative. Though they are formed of a brown stain on the linen sheet, they are as exact as a photographic negative, and they conceal a majestic portrait which only the camera can bring to view. The two stain images on the Shroud defy the most transcendent genius, to say nothing of the naive primitives of the fourteenth century.

When I had gone as far as I could with the material at hand, I ventured to write to Cardinal Fossati, Archbishop of Turin. He deigned to give me a paternal reply, recommending me to Paul Vignon, Professor of Biology at the Institut Catholique in Paris, founder and



secretary of the commission of the Holy Shroud. My education in the multiform science of sindonology was about to begin.

In a correspondence that lasted nine years, Dr. Vignon taught me how to read the photographs of the Shroud, how to penetrate the mysteries of the two stain images. He shared with me the results of his own persistent studies and of the work of members of the commission in Paris. Months before it was published, he sent me the proof sheets of his monumental work which still stands foursquare against every attack. World War II put an abrupt end to the correspondence and claimed Dr. Vignon as one of its victims.

I understood at last that the two figures on the Shroud are the spontaneous imprints of a human corpse, and that they portray with flawless accuracy the whole drama of Calvary, with the savage prelude in the praetorium and the sad sequel in the tomb.

But there was still the historical objection. The scholars still flaunted their documents in the face of all who acknowledged the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin. What are these documents really worth?

In recent years I was able to visit the archives in which these documents are preserved—the State Archives and the Archives of the Royal Chapel in Turin, the Vatican Archives, the Departmental Archives of Savoy at Chambéry and of Aube at Troyes, the Municipal Library of Besançon, and the Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris.

At Troyes, which possesses most of the documents relative to the Shroud in the fourteenth century, I had the good fortune of being assisted by Mons. Joseph Roserot de Melin, till a few years ago Vicar General of the diocese. A trained historian and archivist, he had collaborated with his distinguished father in the *Dictionnaire historique de la Champagne meridionale*, recognized as a notable contribution to the history of France. The preparation of this work had led both father and son to study the documents that refer to the Shroud while it was in their native Champagne, and to the persons involved in the famous dispute at Lirey, out of which was to grow the whole historical case against the authenticity of the Shroud.

Mons. Roserot remained a close student of the question. The pertinent documents in the Departmental Archives at Troyes are almost as familiar to him as the pages of his Breviary. He had the



whole collection of documents in the Bibliotheque Nationale sent to him for a thorough sifting, and he scrutinized the many documents preserved in the Vatican Archives.

During my stay at Troyes he allowed me to prospect freely in the rich mine of his vast and precise knowledge. He gave me the use of his own archival notes and of material inherited from his father. He also gave me the run of his highly specialized private library. I cannot find words to express my gratitude for his unstinted generosity or my admiration for his learning and his critical acumen.

So I saw those documents which seem so convincing to the opponents of the Shroud, and many others of which they are not aware. I had all of them reproduced that I might study them at leisure. I now avow with full conviction that the so-called historical thesis against the Shroud is a canard. To deny the authenticity of the relic of Turin on that basis, is something like denying the historical existence of Christ because some modern critics think they find flaws in the documentary evidence.

The scriptural objection was more serious. If, after all, the imprints on the Shroud could not be reconciled with the sacred text, they could not be the imprints of Christ. The Shroud would then be a monstrous mystery which nothing could explain.

Dr. Vignon told me what the exegetes, the orientalist and the biblical archaeologists of the commission had to offer towards a solution. It was not enough.

I haunted the libraries of New York which have exceptionally rich holdings in biblical and oriental literature and source material—the New York Public Library, the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary and of the General Theological Seminary. Later I was able to work in the Biblical and the Oriental Institute in Rome.

Everywhere I received the most courteous and competent assistance, especially from the Jewish specialists who are well versed in the ancient literature, language and customs of their people. I owe special thanks to Rabbi Jacob Menkes, a noted authority on rabbinical lore. And I welcome this opportunity to express my profound thanks to my confrere Louis Hartman, C.S.S.R., S.S.L., Ling. Or. L., for his expert assistance with Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic texts. To Ariel Agemian, a scholarly Armenian educated by the Mechitarist monks at Venice, I



am indebted for the translation of several documents in ancient Armenian.

Like the historical objection, the scriptural turned out to be a canard. It is based on a false interpretation of John's account of the burial of Christ—false because its exponents disregard the principles of philology and neglect to investigate the Jewish custom according to which the Body of Christ was prepared for its brief repose in the tomb.

The last difficulty against the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin had vanished.

I affirm the impossible. I bear witness to the incredible. I beg leave to repeat my testimony.

The Shroud of Turin is the "clean linen cloth" of which the Evangelists speak. It bears the imprints of Him who was bruised and torn by the scourges, who was crowned with thorns, who was nailed to the cross. It guards His true likeness in the imprints of His own martyred Body, and through the magic of photography that likeness rises before our eyes to challenge, to inspire and to subdue.

\* \* \* \* \*

The present work is a brief statement of the case for the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin. It is a preliminary summary of a larger work in which the case will be presented more completely with a full documentation. This compendium is offered as a fraternal service to the members of the Holy Shroud Guild of America, and to all others who may wish to have in brief and precise form the principal features of this fascinating subject.

I would make my presentation purely expository, but it is not possible to avoid polemics entirely. The present situation requires some notice of the opposition, though the case against the Shroud is still the same as it was in 1900, when Chevalier launched his attack. With an abundance of new evidence available since 1931, there is really no reason why the old controversy should be revived. For my part, I have no desire to engage in a dispute which is now completely beside the point.

I have not burdened the text with references which might have



little meaning for the ordinary reader. For the more studious, the select bibliography at the end will suffice for the present.

The historical part of this work is sufficiently documented by the printed texts in the works of Chevalier, Sanna Solaro, De Jussieu and the *Monumenta Historiae Patriae*.

The scriptural problem is fully treated in my two articles in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, and in my lecture at the first international congress of sindonological studies held at Rome in 1950, the proceedings of which are now in press.\*

The primary documents are the photographs of the Shroud. They bring the imprints before us with a fidelity and a precision that surpass the powers of human language, and they reveal what the unaided eye could never detect in the shadowy stains—the self-portrait of Christ reposing in death.

Rome

Feast of the Eucharistic Heart of Jesus

June 18, 1953.

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\* Reprints of the two articles in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* may be obtained from the Holy Shroud Guild, Esopus, New York. See page 128 for details.

## CHAPTER I

# The Reality and the Replica

### Calvary

THE THREE crosses on the skull-shaped hill are etched like blighted trees against the evening sky. The cross in the middle bears the lifeless body which is still the tabernacle of Divinity, mantled now with its own blood and marked with the crimson insignia of a new royalty—the wounds which will forever proclaim the sovereignty of the Victim of Calvary over the hearts of the redeemed.

And now the final scene is enacted. The sacred body is released from the grip of the nails and borne to the tomb, but there is little time for the burial rites. Though the most innocent of men, Christ is legally a convicted criminal, executed on the most horrible and most infamous gibbet ever invented by man's inhumanity to man. "Cursed be he who hangs on a tree" (Deut. 21:23; Gal. 3:13)—the Law bans the crucified as an abomination and a pollution. Lest their presence defile the land, it commands that their remains be sealed in the tomb before nightfall.

Haste is urgent for another reason. Soon the first three stars appearing in the heavens will signal the beginning of the Sabbath, when no one may occupy himself with the burial of the dead, and that Sabbath is doubly sacred because it is also the Passover, the most solemn feast of the year.

Not far from the place of crucifixion there is the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, in which no one has yet been laid. "There, accordingly, because of the Preparation Day of the Jews, for the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus" (John 19:42).

No one thought of preparing for the burial till Joseph went to Pilate and obtained permission to remove the body, but then the last three-hour period of the day had already begun. Joseph has time to buy a linen shroud on his way back to Calvary, and Nicodemus brings a quantity of spices, a mixture of myrrh and aloes intended as a preservative against corruption. But there is no warm, perfumed



water such as is required for the ritual washing of the dead. Neither are there any ointments for the simple embalming customary among the Jews. The disciples can only bind up the lower jaw with a chin-band and wrap the body in the linen shroud with the spices, while the uncleansed wounds and the clotted blood still trace their tragic pattern on the livid skin. The women will prepare the ointments and return after the Sabbath to perform the customary rites; but then the tomb will be vacant, and there will be only the burial linen with its mute testimony that the Master has risen from the dead.

### Turin

It is the Jubilee year of 1933 commemorating the nineteenth centenary of the death of Christ on the cross. From all parts of Italy and from many lands beyond the Alps and the seas, throngs of pilgrims flock to Turin, the ancient capital of Piedmont. They wend their way to the cathedral, and there they gaze in awe upon a long linen sheet displayed over the high altar. Their eyes are drawn as by a magnet to two life-size figures traced upon the cloth in delicate brown stain, mottled and striped in darker red.

Echoes of a furious controversy intrude upon the devotions of the pilgrims in the hushed cathedral. Historians who trust too blindly in written documents, exegetes who rely too confidently on their own interpretation of the sacred text, a host of the uninformed who believe too readily what they read, are still waging an unrelenting war against the Shroud of Turin. They still insist that it is a fraud of the credulous fourteenth century, and they protest against this renewal of the fraud in the enlightened twentieth century.

But the Shroud is guarded by a phalanx of scholars and scientists who have verified its pedigree. Photography has made a startling revelation which lifts the Shroud above the realm of human art. Physicians, pathologists, experts in legal medicine, have fixed their keen eyes on those two life-size figures, and have found that they bear the inimitable stamp of nature. Their verdict rings reassuringly through the cathedral of Turin.

These two figures as of a man reclining upon the Shroud could never have been counterfeited by the cleverest forger. They are the traces of a human body. Their nature is clear, and they speak a lan-



guage that is unmistakable. They tell of one who was inhumanly tortured and done to a horrible death. He was brutally beaten in the face and his head was punctured at many points. He was scourged and then laden with a rough burden that lay across the shoulders. His hands and feet were transfixed and his right side was pierced while he was in an erect position. He was wrapped in this linen sheet just as he was at the end of his long agony. And he left his burial cloth in some mysterious manner before there were any signs of corruption. (See illustration page 48b.)

This is what the imprints tell us. If you would know the name of the Man of the Shroud, read the Gospels. There you can identify him as surely as a person is identified by his photograph and his fingerprints.

The pilgrims gaze with deeper reverence and love upon the long linen sheet, unrolled like a great scroll with its eloquent imprints. The centuries are annihilated, and Calvary is again a living reality.

## The Shrine of the Holy Shroud

That was the last public exposition of the Shroud of Turin. After the last invocation had died away, the relic was restored to its resting-place in the Royal Chapel adjoining the cathedral. There it has remained to this day, except for an interval of seven years during World War II, when it was lodged with the White Benedictines near Avelino, in a crypt of the monastery on Monte Vergine, one of the highest peaks of the Apennines. Turin was too inviting a target for the bombers of the Allies.

The Royal Chapel, built in honor of the Holy Shroud by the Dukes of Savoy, is a worthy shrine for this marvelous memorial of the Saviour. Lofty and oval in form, the interior is overlaid with polished black marble, which gives it an appearance of somber yet luminous splendor. The curved walls and the Corinthian pillars contrast sharply with the white marble tombs of four illustrious Princes of Savoy. The tessellated pavement is inlaid with stars of brass, burnished to the gleam of gold by the passing feet of pilgrims and daily worshippers. High overhead, dominating the dome of the cathedral, soars a cupola of intricate geometrical design—the creation of that bold, bizarre genius Guarino Guarini, who startled his generation



with his daring originality. Two series of arched windows in the cupola shed the light of day upon two altars facing each other in the center of the chapel, surrounded by a balustrade upon which eight angels succeed in expressing the chubby innocence of childhood in bronze. Above the two altars there is an ornate structure of black marble, and here, behind an iron grating, in an open space called "the sepulchre," lies the reason for all this wealth of piety and art. (See illustration page 80b.)

The Holy Shroud itself is well hidden from view. Lined with red silk, rolled up and wrapped in another sheet of silk, bound with silk ribbons and sealed with the arms of Savoy, the sacred linen lies in an oblong casket of wrought silver. This is contained in an iron chest fortified with three locks, each of which calls for a different key. The iron chest is wrapped in asbestos and is in turn contained within a wooden case, upon which a picture of the Holy Shroud is painted. That is all that one sees behind the grille above the two altars.

It is considered necessary thus to guard the Shroud against the harmful effects of air, light and moisture, and against any accident that might destroy it. However, it is no longer to be so much regretted that the Shroud is so carefully hidden from view during the intervals between expositions. We now have the splendid photographs which reveal much more than the eye could detect upon the Shroud itself.

In earlier times, when the Shroud was preserved at Chambéry and after its transfer to Turin in 1578, it was exhibited every year—on May 4, the feast of the Holy Shroud. More recently there have been public expositions only at long and irregular intervals, but they have compensated for their rarity by being all the more solemn and prolonged. The most significant of all were held in 1898 and 1931, for it was then that the Shroud presented credentials of its authenticity more conclusive than any written documents could be.

## CHAPTER II

# The True Likeness

IN 1898 there was public commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the *Statuto*, the constitution granted by Carlo Alberto to the Kingdom of Sardinia, which was later to become the fundamental law of the united Kingdom of Italy. It was also the four hundredth anniversary of the building of the cathedral of Turin, and the three hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Confraternity of the Holy Shroud.

At Turin these events were commemorated with an artistic, an industrial and a religious exhibit. It seemed appropriate that there should also be a public exposition of the Holy Shroud, the most precious heritage of Turin and the palladium of the House of Savoy since 1453, when it came into the possession of Duke Louis I at Chambery. For nine days, May 25 to June 2, the Shroud was displayed before the multitudes. This was the first time in thirty years that it was seen by anyone. It was also to be the first time that the age-old secret of those two enigmatical figures was to be revealed.

Like all others before them, the pilgrims of 1898 saw two series of dark markings along the whole length of the sheet—scorchings caused by a fire in the Sainte Chapelle in Chambery in 1532. At regular intervals there are white triangular patches where the cloth was consumed by drops of molten silver from the reliquary in which the Shroud was folded at the time of the fire. There are also three series of water stains dating from the same near-disaster, in the form of lozenges through the middle and of half-lozenges along the edges. These details strike the eye most forcibly, but they have nothing to do with the real significance of the Shroud. (See illustration page 48b.)

### “There Is No Beauty in Him”

We are concerned only with the two figures lying head to head along the middle of the sheet. Formed of a brown stain, they do not stand out with much relief against the background of the cloth, faded



now to the tone of old ivory. The reddish marks of wounds and blood are clearer, but one who looks for a natural picture of the Saviour is sure to be disappointed. The evanescent stain seems to form nothing more than an expressionless sketch, described by the elder Paolo Segneri, the renowned pulpit orator, as "the deformity that enamors our faith, but not our sight." The pilgrims of former times have echoed the words of Isaias: "There is no beauty in him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness" (Is. 53:2).

Yet all the while those two strange figures held the answer to a passionate quest of the Christian ages. What did Christ look like?

### The Failure of Art

The answer was not to be given by Art, for the best that Art could offer was only the artist's conception of the human appearance of Christ, and even the greatest of the masters were conscious of groping for something beyond their reach. It was with a sense of failure that Fra Angelico wept before his easel, Leonardo let the brush fall from his hand, and Michelangelo flung aside his chisel. "We would see Jesus," the world pleaded. And the masters of Art were compelled to reply: "We cannot show Him to you. We do not know what He looked like; and even if we knew, He is too great to be portrayed on a canvas or in carved marble and wood."

That age-old quest was now to come to an unexpected and dramatic end. The answer could not be discovered at an earlier period because the true likeness of Christ could be brought to light only through the photograph of the Shroud.

### The Revelation of the Camera

The honor fell to Secondo Pia, a lawyer by profession, a devoted student of the art and archaeology of his native Piedmont, and an enthusiast for the new art invented by Niepce and perfected by Daguerre. In connection with his scientific studies he had considerable experience in photographing old paintings, often in difficult positions and in every kind of lighting. He was well qualified to make the first photograph of the Holy Shroud. Pia's camera shutter clicked and he took his plate to the dark-room.



At first the development of the negative seemed to proceed normally. The black markings of the fire, the dark edges of the water stains, and the reddish marks of wounds and blood—all appeared white. The white triangular patches and the linen of the Shroud appeared black. But the two images! Here was an astounding exception. Instead of the negative version of the shadowy outlines, Pia saw gradually emerging the frontal and the dorsal figure of a well-proportioned man of noble bearing, with natural lighting and shading, and with the reliefs of a sculptured figure. Above all, the face appeared against the black background with the clearness and the force of a living face, its expression a mingling of majesty and sorrow, of peace and calm power, in strange contrast with the cruelly tortured body. It was a face that bore the impress of a superior spirit, unbroken by suffering and unconquered by death. (See illustration page 80 a.)

Later, when Pia could study the negative plate and the positive print and compare both with the Shroud, he understood what had happened. There was no over-exposure, no unusual accident due to light or color or some defect of the plate, no error in the development, and of course not the slightest retouching. The simple fact was that Pia had obtained a positive image on his negative plate because the double image on the Shroud is already a negative. The brown stain is darkest at the reliefs, and it fades away so as to leave only the white cloth to represent the cavities. Reliefs dark, cavities light—the opposite of the normal lighting and shading of a human figure, exactly as in a photographic negative. The stain, moreover, is so uniformly graduated and so delicately detailed that the image is comparable to a genuine photograph of Him Who left the imprints of His Body upon the linen sheet. It is as if the Shroud itself were a great film with the negative image of Christ fully developed.

The Shroud bore its precious secret through the ages, surviving pillage and fire and the ravages of time, until the day when Secondo Pia trained his camera upon it. Then the negative produced in the darkness of the tomb outside Jerusalem was transformed into a positive in Pia's dark-room at Turin. After nineteen centuries human eyes could again look upon the likeness of the Saviour as He was in death, still bearing the emblems of His sacrifice, and with the expression in which His face was moulded by the hand of death.



## CHAPTER III

# The Shroud Before the Tribunal of Science

THE STARTLING revelation of the first photograph of the Shroud caused a profound stir in the scientific world. If the two images are such exact negatives, does not this exclude the possibility of their being the work of some artist? Is not this a new proof of the genuineness of the Shroud—a proof visible to all, easily verifiable, conclusive? And if the Shroud bears the imprints of the dead Christ, may it not reveal much more than His true likeness? May it not teach us significant details of His physical being, of the torments that He suffered, of the manner of His death and burial, perhaps even some faint intimations of His resurrection? Such were the questions that electrified the air and haunted many an inquisitive mind.

## In the Laboratory of the Sorbonne

A group of scientists at the Sorbonne in Paris became interested. Unlikely to be influenced by religious considerations or by popular belief, they were very skeptical until they saw the photograph of the Shroud, provided by Secondo Pia on glass plates both in positive and negative. This was serious! Here surely was a subject worthy of careful investigation.

Paul Vignon, a young instructor of Science, was the moving spirit of the group. He was assisted by E. Herouard and M. Robert of the faculty of the Sorbonne, and by René Colson, tutor of Physics at the Ecole Polytechnique. Most remarkable of all was the fact that Yves Delage took an active part in the investigation. He was an agnostic with a strong prejudice against anything that savored of the miraculous or the supernatural, but he was also a first-rate scientist of international reputation and a member of the French Academy of Sciences. It was on his advice that Vignon undertook the inquiry, and it was in his laboratory and with his assistance that much of the work was done.

After a year and a half the investigation came to an end with a resounding climax. These hard-headed scientists were convinced of the authenticity of the Shroud. More than that, they believed that they had discovered the process by which the imprints were produced in the form of a negative. They decided to bring their findings before the Academy, heedless of the explosive nature of the subject they were handling. What was still more startling, it was Yves Delage who proposed to put the case before his fellow Academicians.

### Before the French Academy

Paris, then, scene of so much chivalry and reckless adventure, was to witness something new. An eminent scientist and an avowed agnostic was to defend the genuineness of this unlikely relic of the Saviour before the highest tribunal of Science in France, at that time composed mainly of religious skeptics and free-thinkers. Only once before was the hall of the Academy so crowded and so hushed with the rapt attention of the audience—the day when Pasteur made his report on the vaccine for the cure of rabies.

Interest in Delage's lecture was all the more intense because strong opposition to the authenticity of the Shroud had formed in Catholic circles under the leadership of the noted historian Canon Ulysse Chevalier. On the basis of certain documents exhumed from the dust of archives and libraries, Chevalier maintained that the two figures on the Shroud were painted with fraudulent intent about the middle of the fourteenth century. This thesis was accepted by practically all Catholic scholars who had taken a position on the question. Now Science was to pronounce its verdict through one of its most distinguished spokesmen. It was April 21, 1902, not the least notable date in the history of the Shroud.

### Not Even Leonardo

The Shroud is not a painting at all, said Delage, either of the fourteenth or of any other century. No matter what the documents in question may say, that hypothesis is absurd. Here is the proof before our eyes—the Shroud itself reproduced with perfect fidelity in these two photographs. They show that the two figures are negatives. The



idea of a negative was unknown before the era of photography, and so no artist before that time could even have thought of painting a picture like that on the Shroud.

Not only that, but these two figures, though outlined by a rather faint stain on the cloth, are as exact as a negative formed by light on a photographic plate. That is why the positive version reveals such a clear and natural portrait, anatomically correct, with true perspective, and with an aesthetic character that one would never have expected. Above all, the face, which appears rather unsightly as it is on the Shroud, becomes so admirable in its expression when the lights and shades are reversed, that in the opinion of artists it is unsurpassed by the best work of the Renaissance.

In the hypothesis that this is a painting, continued Delage, you must imagine an artist who conceived the idea of a negative centuries before the invention of photography. Then you must imagine that this incredible genius knew how to place the lights and shades so that the photographic inversion of his hand-designed negative reveals this unrivaled portrait with its haunting, complex expression. The artist himself could not have seen this positive image while he did his work, since he would be doing everything in reverse. And he would have to do everything with perfect precision, for it is well known how little is needed to alter a beautiful countenance and make it a caricature, especially when its beauty is due to the expression.

There would, of course, be no conceivable reason why the hypothetical artist should want to do a negative. Presumably, he would be painting for his contemporaries, not for the Academy of Sciences or for the parties of the present dispute; nor could he foresee the invention of photography, the only means that could reverse his negative into a positive. He would be taking infinite pains to conceal forever a masterful portrait in an apparently crude sketch.

He would also have used materials and applied a technique unknown before the photograph of the Shroud inspired some clumsy imitations. There is not the slightest trace of any pigments here, nor the least sign of any preparation of the cloth to receive the twofold image. There is nothing but the delicate stain completely absorbed by the fabric, and it is of this stain that that perfect negative is formed.

Yes, the painting hypothesis is absurd, no matter what any written documents may say to the contrary.



In this conclusion the members of the Academy agreed with Delage. After examining the two glass plates provided by Secondo Pia, they admitted that the images on the Shroud could not be the work of any artist.

### The Imprints of Christ

Delage goes on with his report. In reality, the two figures on the Shroud are the imprints of a human corpse, produced by the action of natural forces which work unerringly, given the right conditions. And it can be none other than the body of Christ that caused these imprints. There are the marks of the wounds which, taken altogether, are universally recognized as the exclusive emblems of Christ. There was also the same extraordinary manner of burial, without washing or other preparation of the body. And there are approximately the same limits of time within which these imprints were produced—not less than twenty-four hours and not more than a few days, otherwise the corruption of the body would have destroyed the cloth.

### Vaporograph

Apart from the marks of wounds and blood, the nature of the image as a negative is in harmony with the circumstances of the burial of Christ.

Minute measurements show that the gradation of the stain, like that of a photograph out of focus, corresponds with the natural modeling of a human body reclining upon one half of the sheet and covered with the other half. The stain has the characteristics of an image projected upon a flat surface from a figure in relief, as an image is projected by light upon a photographic plate. The two figures on the Shroud, therefore, could not have been produced by contact alone, otherwise they would be more or less distorted when the cloth is spread out flat.

The delicate, uniform diffusion of the stain is such that it could have been produced only by some subtle emanation from the body that was enveloped in the Shroud. This could have been nothing else than some sort of vapor, and the vapor must have reacted with some substance that sensitized the cloth. The force of the reaction was



greater or less in proportion to the distance between the cloth and the surface of the body. The stain, in fact, is darkest at the reliefs, and it fades away at the receding planes of the cavities, thus accounting for the negative characteristics of the image. This much is certain from a study of the imprints.

What kind of vapor was it that was released from the body? And what was the substance that sensitized the cloth? Delage and his colleagues believed that these questions were solved by their experiments.

First, febrile sweat, such as must have covered the unwashed body of Christ, contains urea, which changes into carbonate of ammonia, and this in turn releases an ammoniac vapor. Secondly, in the mixture of spices used at the burial of Christ there was aloes, and it was found by experiment that aloes reacts with ammoniac vapors so as to produce a brown stain like that on the Shroud. If the vapors are released from a figure in relief, the stain is graduated on the receptive surface according to the contours of the figure.

With regard to the Shroud, there were several circumstances which favored the formation of well proportioned, undistorted images of the body.

Ammoniac vapors diffuse themselves and do not move in straight lines. By themselves, therefore, they could not produce an image so definite and finely detailed as that on the Shroud, but there was another factor present. The air enclosed within the Shroud must have been more or less humid, and it must have formed a certain amount of water vapor, which in still air rises vertically. This would have served as a sort of vehicle for the ammoniac vapor released from the body, which would thus tend in some measure to an orthogonal projection.

The formation of an undistorted image of the entire body was favored also by the fact that the Shroud was new, unbleached linen, woven in a compact twill pattern. Such a cloth is somewhat stiff and does not fold as limply as one that has been used and repeatedly washed.

In addition to the above factors, there was a special circumstance which helps to account for the perfect formation of the image of the face. From the imprint it is clear that at either side of the head there was some kind of support which held the cloth practically flat. Thus



the vapors could design upon the Shroud every detail of the face from which they emanated, and they did their work as if they were endowed with the genius of a supreme master.

The double image on the Shroud, therefore, is not strictly a photograph, which is produced by light and needs a camera, a film and a human operator. Here we have something much more marvelous—a “vaporograph” \* produced in the darkness of the tomb by natural forces without any apparatus or intervention of man.

Altogether, then, concludes Delage, in the imprints on the Shroud and in the Gospels we have an accumulation of evidence that compels us to admit that it was Christ Who left this portrait of Himself upon His winding-sheet, and He left it in the form of a negative that is photographic in its exactness. We know of no other person in history, tradition or legend in whom there might have been fulfilled all the conditions required for the production of this image. “And if this man was not Christ, was he then some malefactor executed for his crimes? How reconcile this with the admirable expression of nobility which you see upon this countenance?”

## Unimpeachable Witnesses

The French scientists had not seen the Shroud itself. It was securely sealed and locked in its triple container and reposed in the “sepulchre” in the Royal Chapel at Turin, while the investigation was carried on in the laboratory of the Sorbonne in Paris. The investigators collected all the information they could from eyewitnesses, but the real basis of their research was the two photographs supplied by Secondo Pia, supplemented and confirmed by several snapshots taken

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\* In recent years the vaporograph theory as described above has been rejected by many who accept the authenticity of the Shroud. The objections, however, do not seem to be conclusive. Vignon himself pointed out the defects of the theory and claimed only that it is a partial and probable explanation of the imprints. On the other hand, no acceptable theory has yet been offered to replace it. Of those that have been proposed there is none that seems to be so well established or to square so well with the nature of the imprints and the circumstances of the burial of Christ. The least satisfactory of all is the theory that attempts to exclude the action of vapors and to ascribe the negative image to contact alone.



privately during the exposition of 1898. Delage pointed out that this was in perfect accord with scientific method, and that the use of photographs had been adopted as a normal procedure in scientific investigation. It is required only that the photograph be a faithful reproduction of the object under study and that the investigator declare frankly what material he is working with.

In this respect, there is something very peculiar about the photographs of the Shroud. We now have twelve that are technically perfect, but Pia's earlier photograph was sufficient to justify the conclusions affirmed by Delage. Not only are they well adapted for the strictest scientific study, they are absolutely indispensable for such a study. This is on account of the nature of the two images. They are negatives—something that the eye could never appraise correctly, either by itself or with the aid of the microscope, or the spectroscope, or X-rays, or any other instrument of scientific investigation. Only a photograph can correctly interpret those two images, because only a photograph can transform them into the corresponding positives. From this point of view, the photographs complete the Shroud in one of its most essential features. Without them it is impossible to understand the true nature of the imprints.

Moreover, the positive photographs—those which reproduce the Shroud in its real aspect as it looks to the eye—are more revealing in many respects than direct examination of the Shroud itself can be. The fact is that the Shroud does not lend itself very well to direct visual examination. It is a sheet about 14 feet 3 inches long and 3 feet 7 inches wide, while each one of the figures measures about 5 feet 11 inches in height. Being formed of a diffuse brown stain, the figures do not stand out very clearly against the faded cloth, and because of their height they can be seen as a whole only from a distance, but then details cannot be accurately observed. Seen close at hand, the marks of wounds and the clots of blood are clear, but details of the stain images are too diffuse and indistinct to be carefully studied. Such were the difficulties encountered by those who were able to examine the Shroud closely in 1931 and 1933. One has an idea of what the difficulties really are from Cussetti's replica of the entire Shroud in its natural dimensions, which is on display in the sacristy of the Royal Chapel.

Now in the photographs everything is reduced and more sharply defined without the slightest alteration. There we can see every detail as if there were a well-focused lens before our eyes. This was not commonly understood in 1902, nor is it understood today by those who attempt to eliminate the photographs by saying that they are merely a *substitute* for the Shroud and have no scientific value. That betrays a complete misconception of the nature of the imprints and of the real significance of the photographs. These are really a subject of scientific study in their own right, and conclusions based upon them can be completely reliable. (See illustration page 48b.)



## CHAPTER IV

# The Reprisal of the Opponents

THOUGH the photograph of the Shroud was a sufficient basis for a scientific study, the scientists of the Sorbonne realized that they must examine the Shroud itself if their investigation was to be complete. They sought permission to do so through Baron Manno, president of the exposition of 1898, but the request was denied by King Umberto I. On the occasion of his lecture, Delage proposed that the Academy appoint a commission and renew the request. The officials refused to undertake such a venture, saying that it was beyond the scope of the Academy.

## The Bigoted Secretary

These circumstances gave rise to misunderstandings and false rumors. It was spread abroad that the Academy had refused to approve Delage's report. The situation was aggravated by the bigoted action of M. Berthelot, the permanent secretary of the Academy of Sciences. He was a leader of the free-thought school in France and hostile to anything that might promote the interests of religion. Knowing beforehand the results of the investigation at the Sorbonne, he tried to prevent Delage from presenting his report to the Academy. He was overruled by the president. Now he abused his authority as secretary by excluding from the journal of the Academy that part of the lecture in which Delage set forth the reasons for holding that the two figures on the Shroud are the imprints of Christ. Thus he made it appear all the more that the Academy had rejected Delage's defense of the authenticity of the Shroud.

The Press made the most of the situation with grotesque distortions of the facts and a campaign of abuse, favored by the intellectual and religious climate of the time, and by the fact that practically all Catholic scholars had accepted Chevalier's thesis. Delage was the prin-

cial target because of his prestige as a scientist and an Academician. He was derided for having belied his position as an agnostic, and was accused of having deliberately betrayed the spirit of Science.

### The Triumphant Rebuttal

Delage answered in an open letter to Charles Richet, director of the *Revue Scientifique*. To set matters straight, he gave a calm, dignified statement of the facts and included in his letter that part of his lecture which Berthelot had banned from the journal of the Academy. Then he resolutely reaffirmed his conviction of the authenticity of the Shroud and disdainfully repelled the accusation that this was incompatible with his integrity as a scientist: "I recognize Christ as a historical personage, and I see no reason why anyone should be scandalized by the fact that there still exist material traces of his earthly life."

Finally, he pointed out the real reason for the violent, venomous attack that had been launched against him. It was not zeal for the honor of Science, but because there was question of a relic of Christ which, if proven to be genuine, had the most momentous consequences: "If our proofs have not been received by certain persons as they deserve to be, it is only because a religious question has been needlessly injected into a problem which in itself is purely scientific, with the result that feelings have run high and reason has been led astray. If, instead of Christ, there were question of some person like a Sargon, an Achilles, or one of the Pharaohs, no one would have thought of making any objection."

So it was rather the vociferous critics who failed to show anything like a scientific spirit. Delage, on the other hand, could confidently assert: "I have been faithful to the true spirit of Science in treating this question, intent only on the truth, not concerned in the least whether the truth would affect the interests of any religious party. There are those, however, who have let themselves be swayed by this consideration and have betrayed the scientific method."

That was the last word on the subject by that great scientist and honest agnostic. He never had to retract any part of his courageous defense of the Shroud. On the contrary, he was to be splendidly vindicated by later developments. Not the least ironical feature of the



whole situation was that an unbeliever defended the Shroud in the name of Science against a solid front of Catholic scholars, who were obsessed by the idea that the question could be decided only by historical documents, and that it had in fact been decided against the Shroud by the documents produced by Chevalier.

### The Brief for the Defense

At the time when Delage's open letter appeared, Paul Vignon published his book *Le Linceul du Christ*, which went into a second edition within a month. It was a full exposition of every point presented by Delage before the Academy. Science, Scripture, Archaeology, History, Art—each received lucid and competent treatment in relation to the problem of the Shroud. Every objection was honestly faced and unsolved difficulties were sincerely acknowledged, but Vignon received no better treatment than Delage. If anything, he fared even worse. The opponents left Delage more or less in peace after his vigorous counter-thrust. They pounced all the more savagely upon his young colleague, who did not have the position or the prestige of the Academician and chief of the Science department of the Sorbonne.

### The Biased Verdict

Apart from ridicule and abuse, just what did the opposition have to offer against the case as presented by Vignon and Delage? Arbitrary assumptions and baseless hypotheses contrary to the established facts. These were not scientists meeting scientists on their own ground. They were historians, theologians, exegetes, journalists, who had ventured into a field in which they had no special competence. Many of them did not even understand the elementary nature of photography. None of them grasped the peculiar significance of the photograph of the Shroud. That was clear from the theories they proposed to explain the fact that the negative photograph of the Shroud yielded a positive image of the two figures. Neither did they show any profound understanding of the principles of physics, chemistry and physiology involved in the explanation of the imprints. The few scientists who aligned themselves with the opposition illustrated what Delage meant when he said that the intrusion of

a religious question into this scientific problem had led reason astray and caused a betrayal of the scientific method.

Logically and scientifically, the case for the authenticity of the Shroud remained completely intact, but it was literally shouted out of court. The learned dons, fascinated by those precious documents, solemnly awarded the verdict to the opposition. Every encyclopedia and reference work dutifully registered the verdict and consigned the Shroud to the limbo of spurious relics. Chevalier had triumphed over Vignon and Delage. But there was to be another day in court, when the Shroud would testify in its own behalf and the final verdict would be rendered by more competent judges.



## CHAPTER V

# The Vindication of the Shroud

THE next public exposition of the Shroud took place May 4-24, 1931, this time on the occasion of the marriage of Umberto, Crown Prince of Italy, and Princess Maria José of Belgium. Once again the Shroud was mounted over the high altar of the cathedral. Once again pilgrims from many lands thronged to Turin. And now eager students of the Shroud, alerted by the discovery of 1898 and the violent dispute that followed, could scrutinize those challenging imprints. They were allowed to do so repeatedly and for hours at a time. Among them was Paul Vignon, able at last to realize the dream of thirty years.

## New Revelations of the Camera

During this exposition Giuseppe Enrie, an expert photographer of Turin and editor of the professional review *Vita Fotografica Italiana*, made twelve photographs of the Shroud under the most carefully calculated conditions, with the best equipment available, and with every guarantee of genuineness and accuracy. These photographs, made with large glass plates, were intended primarily to provide an irreproachable subject for scientific study. They included four photographs of the entire Shroud, the entire Shroud in three sections on three distinct plates, the complete dorsal imprint, the face and bust, the face in two-thirds the dimensions of the original, the face in the natural dimensions of the original, the wound and blood on the left hand enlarged sevenfold directly from the Shroud.

Private photographs were also made. These have a confirmative value, but those made by Enrie are the only ones officially recognized. They are also guaranteed to be technically perfect in a notarized statement by a commission of professional photographers who examined the original plates and prints and compared them with the Shroud. Enrie himself published a careful technical report of the entire process.

Enrie's photographs were a new revelation. They showed that the two figures are negatives even more perfectly formed and more exact in detail than was revealed in 1898, when the Shroud was photographed



under glass and with faulty illumination, and when photography itself was still in an early stage of development.

At the exposition of 1933 the Shroud was again seen by many qualified judges. At the closing of that exposition it was possible to examine and to photograph the Shroud in broad daylight, when the procession halted for about ten minutes on the steps of the cathedral. Dr. Pierre Barbet tells us that on this occasion he experienced one of the most profound emotions of his life. Gazing intently upon the Shroud with the practiced eye of a surgeon and a former Professor of Anatomy, he suddenly realized that he was looking at dry clots of blood, incredibly precise in appearance. He recognized them as one recognizes the photograph of a familiar face.

### Again Before the Tribunal of Science

The new findings were so rich and varied, and they gave rise to so many new problems, that Vignon organized a commission of research, the roster of which included many of the most eminent names in the science, the technology, the art and the scholarship of Italy and France.

In 1938 Vignon published the final results of his own studies—the mature work of an able and impartial investigator, who, in the words of Paul Claudel, “devoted himself to this subject for thirty-six years with all his talents, his learning, and his virtues as a scientist.”

In 1939 the Italian commission held a national convention at Turin, at which the fruits of research on the multifarious aspects of the question were presented.

In 1950 the first international congress of sindonological studies was held in Rome. Here some new results were brought forth and the remaining problems were more exactly defined. Some of these problems can be solved only by certain scientific tests upon the Shroud itself. These tests have not yet been made, though all serious students of the Shroud desire them. I shall have something to say below on this topic. For the present, I note that the absence of these tests means only that not all means of scientific investigation have yet been applied. Meanwhile the evidence that has been definitely established is more than sufficient to prove the essential point—the authenticity of the Shroud.



## CHAPTER VI

# The Self-Portrait of Christ in Negative

RECALL what was said above about the nature of a negative and about the two negative images on the Shroud. Remember, it is not merely a question of any kind of crude negative, such as might be had by taking the imprint of a statue. We are dealing with two stain images that are comparable with a photographic negative—so perfectly formed and so precise in the smallest particulars that, when they are reversed by photography, they appear flawless from an anatomical point of view and unsurpassed in art by reason of the expression of the face.

### Achiropoeton

*Achiropoeton*, “not made with hands”—the term was applied to many pictures of Our Lord which were believed to have been produced without human agency. As will be seen below, these were derived directly or indirectly from the imprint on the Shroud. They were art works, but in popular belief they were endowed with a supernatural origin and designated by the term which can properly be applied only to the original. The image on the Shroud is the true *achiropoeton*—“not made with hands,” it is above and beyond the realm of art.

In lieu of the original photographs, study the reproductions in this booklet, and then ask yourself: Could any artist have produced *these* negative images? Could even the most gifted genius have reversed the lights and shades so unerringly that a photograph of his work would reveal *this* positive image of the face? Reffo and Cussetti—no amateurs, to be sure—tried to copy the imprint of the face as it is on the Shroud, that is, the negative image. Cussetti even used a fine spray to imitate the delicate diffusion of the stain. Both of them had the photograph of the Shroud as a guide, in its positive as well as in its negative version. The result in each case as revealed by a photograph is something that no medieval artist could even have thought of attempting. Compared with the image on the Shroud, it is a pitiful failure.



There is a test that demonstrates even more clearly how impossible it is for any artist to have painted the negative image on the Shroud.

In art criticism one means of testing the correctness of a miniature—the technique, the accuracy of details, the harmony of the proportions—is by photographic enlargement. If there is any flaw, it will surely appear in the enlarged image; and the greater the enlargement, the more strongly will the flaw be emphasized.

The entire frontal and dorsal figure on the Shroud was enlarged to its natural dimensions, the imprint of the face three and a half times its natural dimensions. In each case the enlargement was made in both positive and negative. This provides a new and highly effective means of evaluating the positive image from an anatomical and an aesthetic point of view, and of calculating the exactness of the negative image as it is on the Shroud.

The two entire figures remain anatomically without a fault. They become even more “natural” in appearance, they gain in depth and perspective, and stand out with the solidity of a real human body suspended in mid-air.

The positive image of the face, though three and a half times larger than a real human face, remains irreproachable in all its details and in the harmony of its proportions. The expression becomes even more imposing and more suggestive of a potent spiritual quality. This is the image which is latent in the stain on the Shroud, and which can be brought to view only by means of a photograph. No wonder Vignon said of the painting theory: “It moves all experts to laughter.”

### Again the Failure of Art

Many artists have tried to copy the positive image of the face—relatively a much easier task. The work of a few has high merit. The best one that I know is that of Ariel Agemian. It is a reconstruction of the living face in which the features of the Christ of the Shroud are retained. It could be placed with honor among the masterpieces of Christian Art. But here is a remarkable fact. In every attempt to copy or to adapt that image, something essential is lost—some indefinable element which gives the face its peculiar power and beauty, though the eyes are closed and the features are composed in death.

Paul Claudel seems to have divined what that element is which



eludes the artists: "In that image we see the majesty of the God-man, and the in the presence of that majesty we become profoundly conscious of our complete and radical unworthiness. There is something overwhelming in those closed eyes, in that masterful countenance which seems to bear the impress of eternity—something that pierces the conscience like the thrust of a sword to the heart, something so awful and so annihilating that our only means of escape is to bow down in adoration."

The conclusions derived from the photographic and the aesthetic study of the Shroud are not a matter of personal taste or wishful thinking. They are hard facts verified by experience and confirmed by the history of art. Nor do they represent merely the verdict of the modern critic. It is also the verdict of the great masters speaking through their works—Leonardo, Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo, all the titans of art. They proclaim that no human artist could have signed his name to the positive portrait of the Christ of the Shroud, and they repel the hypothesis that even the greatest among them could have designed the negative image in which that unrivaled portrait lies concealed.

## CHAPTER VII

# The Corpus Delicti

WE NOW enter the field of legal medicine, that branch of medical science which applies biological and clinical knowledge and methods of research to the solution of juridical problems. One of its functions is the investigation of crime. It detects and interprets clues, identifies the victim, and strives to reconstruct the crime as it was committed. Its findings are often decisive in determining the verdict of the court, even though the life of a human person be at stake.

The Shroud was studied from the viewpoint of legal medicine in 1900-02 by the Sorbonne group. After the exposition of 1931 the medico-legal investigation was continued with more abundant data and on a much broader basis by members of the commission of the Holy Shroud and by others, all working independently. Notable among them are the following: Paul Vignon, Prof. of Biology at the Institut Catholique in Paris; Dr. Pierre Barbet, Chief Surgeon of St. Joseph's Hospital in Paris; Dr. Vincent Donnet of Marseilles; Dr. Giovanni Judica-Cordiglia, Prof. of Legal Medicine at the U. of Milan; Dr. Luigi Gedda, Prof. of Gynecology at the U. of Rome; Dr. Ruggero Romanese, Director of the Institute of Legal Medicine at the U. of Turin; Dr. Maurizio Masera, Prof. of Chemistry and the Natural Sciences at the U. of Genoa; Dr. Pietro Scotti, Priest and Doctor of Medicine, Surgery and the Natural Sciences, Prof. at the U. of Genoa; Dr. Giuseppe Caselli, Physician and Radiologist of Fano; Lt. Col. Nicolantonio Rodinò, Medical Officer of the Italian Army; Dr. Leopoldo Lopez Gomez, Prof. of Legal Medicine at the Royal Academy of Medicine in Valencia; Dr. Tomàs Lerga Luna, Prof. of Legal Medicine at the U. of Saragossa; Dr. Hermann Mödder of St. Francis Hospital, Cologne; Dr. Rudolf Hynek of Prague.

With perhaps one or the other exception, this is an array of experts that must be taken seriously. Some of them had examined the Shroud, even repeatedly. All of them had the superb Enrie photographs, which in certain respects are preferable to the Shroud itself for critical study.



They had the facilities of well-equipped laboratories at their disposal for experimental research. Though working independently, they came to the same conclusions, namely, that the two figures on the Shroud are the frontal and the dorsal imprints of a human corpse, and that the many varied details of the imprints provide a sure basis for reconstructing the tortures, the death and the burial of the Man of the Shroud, and for establishing his identity.

## The Wounds

There are the marks of many wounds, so exact and so realistic as to defy the microscope and the photographic enlarger. The marks were evidently impressed by real wounds in human flesh, corresponding in form and the nature of the injury to the various instruments with which they were inflicted. There were lacerations, contusions, swellings, excoriations, punctures about the head, perforations of the hands and feet, a deep incision in the side.

The different wounds also acted in characteristic fashion. Each one bled in a manner that corresponded to the nature of the injury. Not once have they been found at fault in this respect. From some of the wounds there was a serous oozing after the bleeding had ceased. This is clear especially on the calf of the left leg and on the shoulder blades of the dorsal figure.

## The Blood

There is unquestionably blood on the Shroud. This is evident from the formation of the streams and the trickles, from their relationship with the wounds, and from the characteristic separation of clot and serum which is plainly visible in many places. The blood flowed from the wounds in accord with the consistency of fresh human blood, with the irregularities of the surface, and with the position of the various members. In every instance it obeyed the force of gravity with perfect fidelity.

Besides the blood that flowed during life, there is other blood which apparently issued after death—from the wound in the side and in the soles of the feet. In each case the blood was accompanied by an organic fluid, which is not to be confused with the serum that separated from the clot in coagulation of the living blood.



The blood that flowed during life had already clotted before the body was enveloped in the Shroud. This is clear from the fact that the blood is present in the imprints in the precise position that it had originally in relation to the body. It did not flow in a new direction when the body or particular members were moved, as when the arms were brought down from their extended position and the hands were crossed. This blood, therefore, was somewhat solid and dry on the surface of the body, and yet it was completely transferred to the Shroud, which would seem to be contrary to the coagulated condition of the blood.

Experiments by Vignon offer an explanation of this enigma. They show that the fibrin in clotted blood reliquifies partially in an ammonia-laden atmosphere; and if the clot is in contact with a cloth, it is impressed after the manner of a decalcomania. According to Dr. Barbet, the clot is simply softened again by the humidity in the air without reliquifaction of the fibrin.

### The Imprints of a Corpse

In many parts of both the frontal and the dorsal figure there are the marks of many small drops of a serous fluid which exuded from the pores of the body. It was probably hours after the body had been enveloped in the Shroud that this exudation took place, since it affected the imprints already formed on the cloth. It also slightly hollowed out some of the clots after they had been transferred to the Shroud. This exudation is a proof that the Shroud enveloped a corpse, for it shows that the natural post-mortem process was going on. From the imprints it is clear that this process came to an abrupt end before there were any signs of corruption.

There are three other features of the imprints which indicate that the Shroud enveloped a corpse.

First, the condition of the blood that escaped from the wound in the right foot as it rested on the Shroud. This was not like the fresh, free-flowing blood that issued from the other wounds. It was a viscous, semi-fluid mass which remained intact even where it flowed directly on the cloth. It issued from the wound together with a rather abundant quantity of serum which left a broad stain around the imprint of the foot.



Secondly, the nature and the position of the wound in the side—the right. It was an incision between the fifth and the sixth rib, two and a half inches long and half an inch wide. It slants with the line of the ribs and its nearest point is about five inches from the midline of the sternum. The wound was deep and it may have penetrated the heart. At any rate, it caused a copious flow of blood which had a thicker consistency than blood normally has. Moreover, this blood was accompanied by some kind of organic liquid which spread beyond the blood on the surface of the body.

Thirdly, the body was already rigid when it was enveloped in the Shroud. It had evidently grown rigid while it was suspended by the hands and the crossed feet.

Most of these details can be seen and understood by anyone who approaches the Shroud with an open mind. There are some that can be detected and rightly explained only by specialists; but once the specialists point out their discoveries, anyone can see that there actually is upon the Shroud what they say there is. ✓

All the features of the imprints together form a unit. They are all the result of one complicated process, consisting in the spontaneous action of different factors working together. While the two stain images of the entire body were being formed—partly by contact, principally by the action of vapors emanating from the body—the marks of the wounds were being impressed along with the serous oozings, the blood already clotted on the body was being redissolved and transferred to the cloth, and then the pores began to exude small drops of serum which affected the stain images and the blood.

Each one of these features bears the inimitable stamp of nature. Not one of them could have been forged by any artificial means. Still less could the whole process have been counterfeited. Nor could these imprints have been obtained with a human corpse deliberately prepared for the purpose. The marks of the wounds and the blood show that they are the imprints of one who was tortured in various ways during life, and who died with arms outstretched and with hands and feet fixed with nails. ✓

Moreover, for the production of the imprints there must have been a concurrence of circumstances which could not have been planned or foreseen. And the whole process came to an end at exactly the right moment, when every detail was perfectly formed and before

there was any trace of decomposition. These are the *spontaneous* imprints of a human corpse in the production of which there could have been no human agency.

This is the first phase in the medico-legal proof of the authenticity of the Shroud. It does not depend on any historical documents or on any kind of human testimony. It consists in the visible evidence which the Shroud itself presents, and which the photographs reproduce with almost microscopic exactness.



## CHAPTER VIII

# Who Do You Say That I Am?

IF THE Shroud of Turin were a plain cloth, there would be no way of knowing whence it came except through a continuous series of written records whereby we could trace it to its origin, but there would always be a flaw in that kind of argument. We could never be sure that the original cloth had not been replaced with another somewhere along the line.

But the Shroud is not a plain cloth. It bears the complete frontal and dorsal imprints of a human corpse, with a rich variety of significant details. Moreover, these imprints were produced by the action of natural forces under conditions which can be precisely determined. They cannot be the work of any human agent, and so we are sure that we possess the original burial cloth of the Man of the Shroud. And the imprints tell their own story more accurately than any historical documents could. They are a visible portrayal of the tragic fate of the Man of the Shroud—a series of definite historical events which took place at a definite historical time.

If we have elsewhere the record of the same events related of a definite person, we have a good historical basis for identifying the Man of the Shroud. And if the events taken altogether are unparalleled in history, the identification is certain and irrefutable.

We have that historical record in the four Gospels. They relate with much detail the tragic end of Christ's earthly life, from the Agony in the Garden to the Resurrection. They tell of the various tortures which surely left their characteristic marks upon His Body. They describe the extraordinary manner of His death and burial, and the finding of the grave-clothes after He had vanished from the tomb. It is a drama unique in the history of the world. Nobody ever thought of ascribing it to anyone else.

The Shroud of Turin presents a complete and precise tableau of the same unique drama, and compels us to conclude that it is the winding-sheet of Christ with the imprints of His tortured and wounded Body.



This conclusion is not weakened in the least by the lack of historical documents whereby we might trace the Shroud from the "sepulchre" in the Royal Chapel at Turin to the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. That means only that we do not know the career of the Shroud through the ages, but we do know what it is and whence it came. For this, the Shroud and the Gospels together provide a proof which even the opponents dare not deny. They can only make futile efforts to explain away the genuineness of the imprints.

Father Thurston, for example, writes of the Shroud of Turin: "As to the identity of the body whose image is seen on the Shroud, no question is possible. The five wounds, the cruel flagellation, the punctures encircling the head, can still be clearly distinguished in spite of the darkening of the whole fabric. If this is not the impression of the Body of Christ, it was designed as the counterfeit of that impression. In no other personage since the world began could these details be verified."

We shall see that there is much more than the five wounds, the scourging and the crowning with thorns to show that Christ and the Man of the Shroud are one and the same.

## The Buffeting

Christ was repeatedly struck in the face on three occasions—at the night session of the Sanhedrin, when He was first sentenced to death; after the session in the morning, when the sentence of death was ratified; and at the mocking homage paid to Him when He was crowned with thorns. He was struck by the guard, by attendants of the court, apparently by some of the Sanhedrists, and by the Roman soldiers (Matt. 26:67-68; Mark 14:65; Luke 22:63-64; John 18:22-23; 19:3). The terms used by the Evangelists signify heavy blows that wound or prostrate, blows with the palm of the hand, with the fist, with a rod or switch.

The face of the Man of the Shroud was cruelly maltreated. The imprint shows that there were several excoriations, especially on the brow, the orbital arches and the right cheek, where there was also a large swollen bruise. There was an excoriation and a swelling also at the bridge of the nose. The right eyelid is sharply contracted.



## The Scourging

It was Pilate who ordered Christ to be scourged, and the sentence was carried out by Roman soldiers (Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15; John 19:1). This made a great difference. The Mosaic Law limited a judicial scourging to forty lashes (Deut. 25:3). In practice only thirty-nine were administered, lest the legal limit be inadvertently exceeded (2 Cor. 11:24). With the Romans, however, the executioners were free to administer as many strokes as they pleased. Christ was surely not spared if Pilate could hope that the sight of Him might move the multitude to pity: "Behold the Man."

The Man of the Shroud received a merciless scourging that spared only the face and the extremities. The long thongs left stripes across the shoulders and the back. They encircled the legs and cut the flesh. The chest, the abdomen and the back were struck many times with the weighted ends of the thongs, which left deep bruises in the form of a dumbbell.

From the form, the position and the grouping of the wounds we can reconstruct the scourge—long, thin thongs, apparently two, each weighted with two round pieces of bone or metal about an inch and a half apart. With many of the blows the end of the thong joining the two weights left its mark, causing bruises with that peculiar shape of a dumbbell. From archaeological data it is known that such a scourge was in use among the ancient Romans.

The Shroud shows very little blood from the wounds of the scourging. At first sight a discrepancy, this turns out to be in perfect harmony with Matthew (27:31) and Mark (15:20), who relate that after the scourging Christ was again clad in His own garments. There followed the journey to Calvary, during which much of the blood must have been absorbed by the garments, the absorption no doubt being facilitated by the perspiration.

## The Crowning With Thorns

"And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed into his right hand . . . and they took the reed and kept striking him on the head" (Matt. 27:29-30; Mark 15:17-19; John 19:2).

The form of the crown is not described, but the soldiers must have woven it rather roughly with thorn branches. It was no artistic



effort. They were merely regaling themselves with a play of cruel mockery, suggested by Christ's claim to be the King of the Jews.

In the imprints there are the marks of punctures on the brow, with four clots of blood and a trickle in the form of a reversed 3. Other punctures at the front of the head are covered by the hair, in which several streams of blood clotted. At the back of the head the punctures were more numerous, and they extended almost to the base of the skull, as can be seen from the many trickles of blood that clotted in the hair. One cannot tell whether the top of the head was injured, since there is no imprint of this part. At certain points about the head the flow of blood was hindered by some obstacle, probably a circle of some kind that held the thorn branches in place.

### The Carrying of the Cross

"And bearing the cross for himself, he went forth to the place called the Skull" (John 19:17).

The contemporaries of the Evangelist understood without further explanation what it was that Christ carried. The data gleaned from historical sources indicate that it was not the complete cross as is invariably depicted in art, but rather the crossbeam only, to which the outstretched arms were bound. It is to be noted that all four Evangelists say that the executioners *led* Christ away to be crucified (Matt. 27:31; Mark 15:20; Luke 23:26; John 19:16). This is an allusion to the practice of leading the condemned by a rope tied around the waist. Christ Himself refers to this mode of carrying the cross in His words to Peter: "When thou art old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another will gird thee, and lead thee where thou wouldst not. Now this he said to signify by what manner of death he should glorify God" (John 21:18-19). On an earlier occasion Christ had hinted that, like Himself, Peter would be crucified (John 13:36).

The incident of Simon of Cyrene also indicates that Christ carried only the crossbeam. The terms used by Matthew (27:32) and Mark (15:21) mean that Simon, rather than merely assisting Christ, took the cross away from Him and carried it alone. The Evangelists use the same verb to quote Our Lord when He says: "Take my yoke upon you" (Matt. 11:29). Luke (23:26) is even more explicit: They laid the cross upon Simon that he might carry it walking behind Jesus.



The Greek word for cross (*staurós*) does not necessarily mean a complete cross as we now understand it. In ancient usage it meant either the upright or the transverse beam. The same word, in fact, signified also the stake on which the condemned were sometimes impaled. In Latin the term most commonly used in reference to the carrying the cross was *patibulum*, which signifies precisely the cross-beam.

The Shroud clearly portrays the carrying of the crossbeam. It is in conflict with popular belief and the tradition of art, but it agrees with the Gospels and the practice of the Romans.

There is no trace of any injury at the top of either shoulder, such as would be caused by the carrying of a complete cross. We see there the stripes of the scourging, but the flesh was otherwise intact.

On both shoulder-blades, however, there was an extensive excoriation—the sort of effect that would be caused by the friction of a rough burden like the transverse beam of a cross. There are also the traces of an abundant oozing, such as would continue after the friction had ceased. Moreover, it is clear that the burden was carried after the scourging, for on each shoulder-blade the wounds inflicted by the scourge were subsequently aggravated and altered in form, some of them almost obliterated, by the friction of the burden which caused such an extensive abrasion of the skin. In the case of the Man of the Shroud, as in that of Christ, everything points to the carrying of the crossbeam only.

## The Crucifixion

All four Evangelists say simply: "They crucified him" (Math. 27:35; Mark 15:25; Luke 24:33; John 19:18). There was no need of describing what Cicero calls "the ultimate punishment of slaves," and St. Augustine "the most horrible and most ignominious form of execution."

It is certain that Christ was nailed to the cross. "See my hands and feet, that it is I myself." (Luke 24:39), He said to the disciples when He appeared to them after the resurrection. It was the Roman practice.

The Man of the Shroud was also nailed to a cross. The feet were crossed, the left over the right, and fixed with a single nail driven



through the insteps. The imprints of the right foot (that of the left is incomplete) shows that blood flowed from the wound towards the toes. This was fresh blood which clotted on the sole and was afterwards impressed on the Shroud.

There was another flow from the wound in each foot after extraction of the nail, while the body lay on the lower half of the Shroud with the feet turned upwards. In the case of the right foot, a portion of this second issue flowed beyond the heel in a fold of the Shroud. It did not spread on the cloth as fresh liquid blood normally would. As stated above, it was a dense viscous mass which issued together with an abundant quantity of serum—a condition which agrees with the fact that the Body of Christ was left on the cross for about two hours after death.

The imprint of the back of the left hand, which lies over the right, shows that the hand was pierced, not through the palm, but at a certain point in the wrist. Dr. Barbet has demonstrated that this is in accord with the anatomy of the hand and the requirements of crucifixion. He performed many experiments with hands freshly amputated, and therefore retaining the condition of the living tissues. The tissues of the palms tore rather easily when they were pierced by a nail and traction was applied. In a real crucifixion the nails would surely have torn through the yielding flesh if they were driven through the palms. Even if the weight of the body were supported by a projection at the middle of the upright beam, the hands might still have been torn loose by the spasmodic contractions or the impulsive struggles of the crucified.

On the other hand, in Dr. Barbet's experiments the tissues did not tear at all when the nail was driven through the wrist at the point known as the space of Destot, which lies among small bones at the base of the hand. At this point a nail can be driven through easily without breaking any bone, and it will hold firmly against the greatest traction. It is here that the wound is localized in the imprint on the Shroud.

A nail fixed in the space of Destot presses or lacerates the median nerve, which controls the muscular action of the fingers. In Dr. Barbet's experiments such injury to this nerve invariably caused the four fingers to curve slightly and stiffly, while the thumb was turned against the palm—exactly the position of the fingers and the thumbs in the imprint on the Shroud.



Blood flowed along the arms while they were extended on the cross. At several points on the left forearm the blood was deflected and flowed vertically down the side. At the back of the left hand there are two trickles of blood which also flowed vertically during the crucifixion. These streams are still in their original position in relation to the arm and the hand. Thus they enable us to calculate the angle at which the arms were extended on the cross—about 65 degrees from the vertical.

In the imprints of the Shroud we have an exact portrayal of the technique of crucifixion, and of one crucifixion in particular which supplies for the reticence of the Evangelists.

### The Wound in the Side

“The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other, who had been crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs; but one of the soldiers opened his side with a lance, and immediately there came out blood and water” (John 19:32-34).

Roman Law demanded that the crucified be left to perish on the cross, and thereafter their bodies could not be removed without official authorization. In Palestine, because of the penal code of the Mosaic Law, it was often necessary to remove the crucified before they had succumbed to their torments. In such cases they were despatched by the breaking of the legs.

In the case of Christ there were several extraordinary features which place it apart by itself. Crucifixion was a lingering torture which could last as much as two or three days. Though He was in the vigor of His manhood, Christ died after three hours. This was so exceptional that Pilate was surprised when it was reported to him by Joseph of Armathea, and he sent for the centurion to verify the fact before granting permission to remove the body (Mark 15:44-45). To the soldiers it was evident that Christ was already dead, so they did not break His legs, and yet one of them plunged a spear into His side. This must have been about an hour after Christ had breathed His last.

“And immediately there came out blood and water”—an event so



extraordinary that St. John, an eye-witness, affirms it with singular emphasis.

There are various theories as to what the "water" might have been. We are not now concerned with this problem, but only with the fact that some watery fluid issued from the side, distinct from the blood and in sufficient quantity to be seen by John standing near the cross.

The position and the nature of the wound in the side as impressed on the Shroud were described above; also the fact that the blood appears to have had a thicker consistency than blood normally has, and that there issued along with it a distinct quantity of some kind of organic fluid. The body was erect when the side was pierced, for the blood and the separate liquid flowed downward from the wound. Besides that which adhered to the skin, an indefinite amount must have fallen to the earth.

There was a second flow from the wound in the side when the body was laid on the Shroud. This accounts for the two meandering streams that extend across the loins in the dorsal image. These seem to have flowed directly upon the Shroud under the arched loins, as could easily have been the case in view of the fact that this was a new cloth of unbleached linen, woven in a compact twill pattern and somewhat stiff. Here there seem to have been clots of blood carried along by the more abundant serous fluid.

Altogether, the wound in the side, with the issue of blood and "water," is one of the most striking coincidences between the Shroud and the Gospels.

### Rigor Mortis

After death the Body of Christ remained suspended on the cross for hardly less than two hours. Under the circumstances, it must have grown rigid much more rapidly than is normally the case. It was probably rather thoroughly stiffened by the time it was taken down from the cross.

The body enveloped in the Shroud was already rigid. This is suggested by the general appearance of the two figures, but there are more precise indications. The arms had been brought down from their extended position, but the hands remained as they had been on the cross, stiffened with the spontaneous curvature of the fingers and



the inward bend of the thumbs illustrated by Dr. Barbet's experiments. The feet also were stiffened in the position they had on the cross, sloped forward and inward. It is an unnatural position which could not have been maintained if the feet had been normally flexible. The left foot had been crossed over the right. This caused a bend in the left knee, which grew rigid in that position and remained bent upward while the body was enveloped in the Shroud.

One looks in vain for realistic details like these in art. They are present in these imprints because the Shroud registered with the utmost fidelity the condition of the body that rested within its folds.

## The Burial

When the body was finally taken down from the cross, the Sabbath was imminent and there was no time for the customary burial rites. The disciples could carry out at most a hasty, provisional burial. The three Synoptics tell the whole story in one sentence: "And Joseph taking the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock" (Math. 27:60; Mark 15:46; Luke 23:53).

St. Mark (16:1) and St. Luke (23:56) clearly exclude the anointing. Neither can we assume that the body was washed, for the ritual ablution of the dead had to be done with warm water, perfumed with aromatic spices. Warm water could hardly have been provided in those last hurried moments outside the walls of the city—no more than the ointments which were certainly lacking. So the body was provisionally wrapped in the linen sheet just as it was when taken down from the cross. The perfect harmony of the Shroud with the Synoptics is obvious.

St. John (19:39-40; 20:5-7) adds three details to the account of the Synoptics.

The first is that there were other cloths besides the winding-sheet. It is practically certain that one of these was a chin-band binding up the lower jaw, which is known to have been in use among the ancient Jews. This would explain the vacant space on the Shroud between the heads of the two figures. The imprint would be continuous had there not been some obstacle at the top of the head.

What other cloths were present, and what purpose may they have



served? The text gives no further clue and it is risky to speculate. Of one thing we can be certain—there were no swathing-bands. St. John says explicitly that the Body of Christ was wrapped in the linen cloths “according to the custom of the Jews in preparing the dead for burial.” It never was the custom of the Jews to bind the dead with swathing-bands after the manner of a mummy. The historical sources indicate something quite different—either clothing in ordinary garments or envelopment in a shroud. In this respect, there is perfect harmony between John and the Synoptics—and the Shroud of Turin.

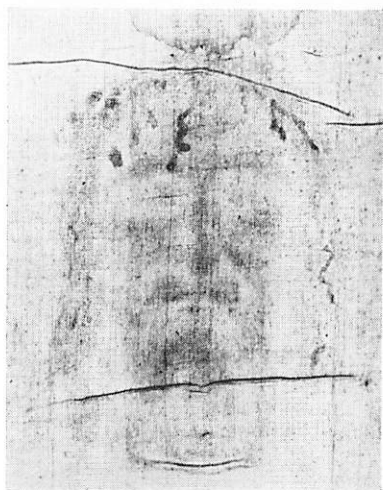
The second detail added by John is that there was a *soudarion* “which had been upon his head.” The *soudarion* could not have been a napkin covering the face, for it was not the custom of the Jews at that time to cover the face of the dead with a cloth distinct from the Shroud. Even if it had been, there would have been no reason whatever for doing so at the hasty, provisional burial of Christ just a few paces from the cross. The historical sources and philological data leave us no alternative but to conclude that the *soudarion* was either the chin-band or the winding-sheet folded over the head,—more probably the latter. There is still perfect harmony between John and the Synoptics—and the Shroud of Turin.

The third additional detail is that the body was wrapped in the burial linen along with the mixture of myrrh and aloes. According to St. John’s description and extra-biblical sources, the spices must have been a dry powder. On this point the exegetes are practically unanimous. Now there is reason to believe that there was a dry powder on the Shroud. While it enveloped the body, the Shroud was moistened at the middle of the frontal imprint, at the shoulder-blades by the serum from the excoriations, and by the serum from the wound in the right foot. In each one of these places, as the liquid spread upon the cloth by capillary attraction, it carried along with it a mass of small particles which accumulated at the edge of the stain left by the liquid.

The presence of aloes brings in the final element which led the scientists of the Sorbonne to formulate the vaporograph theory in an effort to explain the process by which the two stain images were produced in the form of a negative. Ammoniac vapors released from the sweat of the unwashed body reacted with the aloes on the Shroud and

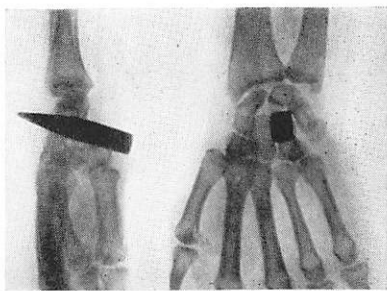
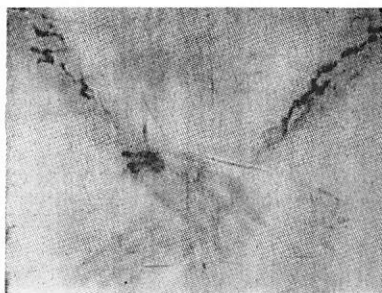


## **Imprints of Christ**

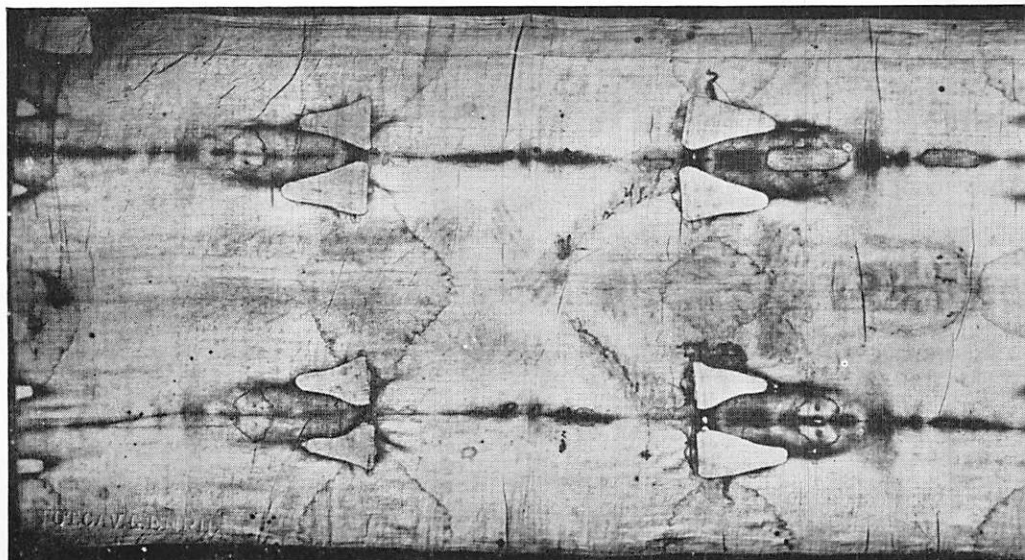


He carried the bloody testimony of the  
crown of thorns with Him to the grave.

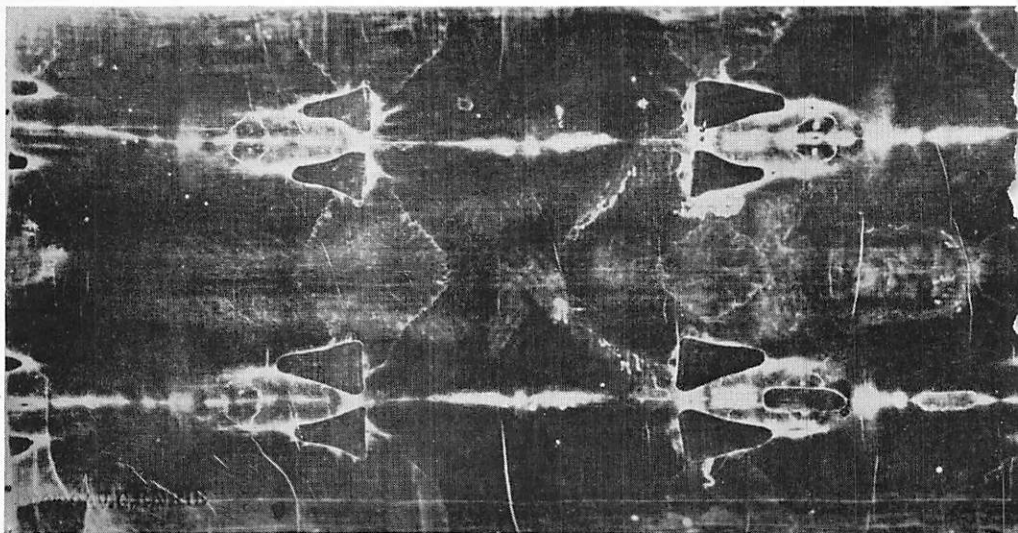
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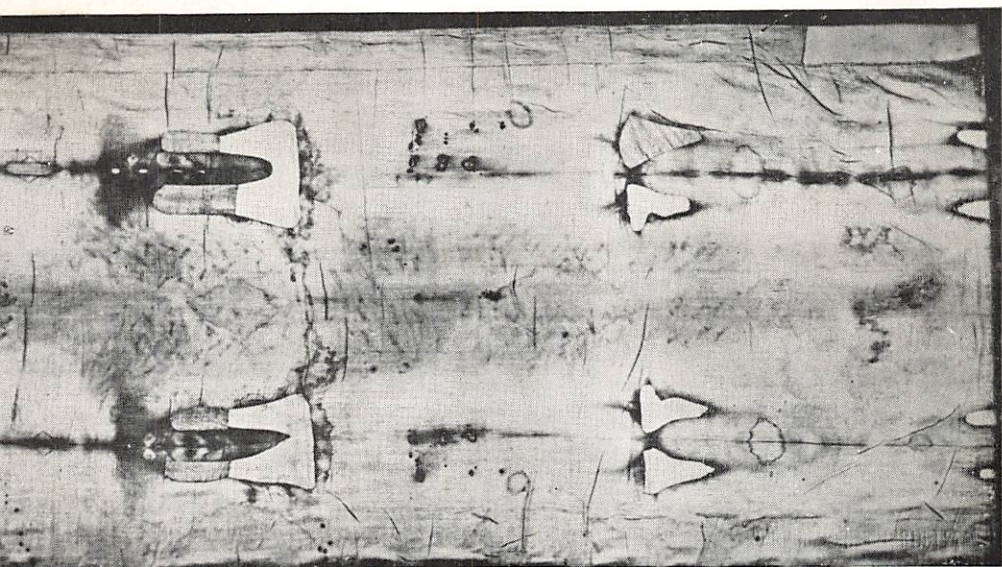
His hands were nailed at the wrists.



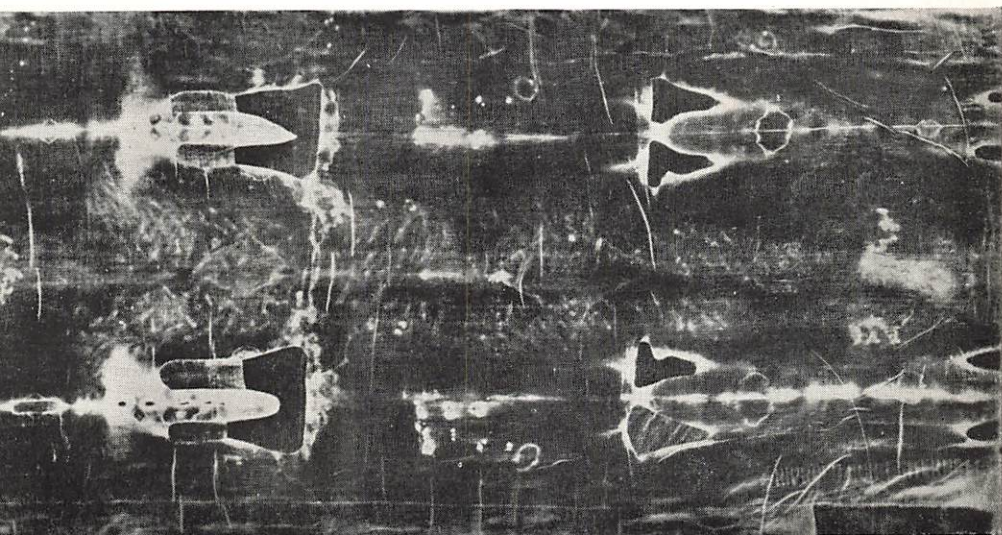
*As the Holy Shroud looks to the eye. The little triangles along either side are patches sewn over the portions burned in the fire of 1532. The figures along the center are negative images of the back (right) and the front (left) of the Body of Christ.*





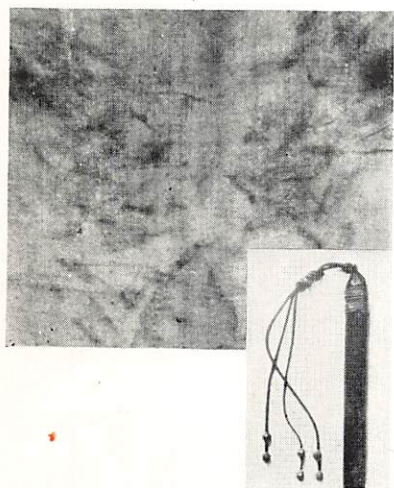


↓ As the Holy Shroud appears on a photographic plate. The negative images on the cloth are now reversed into positive images revealing the true appearance of the Face and Body of Christ, as He lay in the tomb awaiting Easter.





Detail of the blood-stains from the wounds caused by the crown of thorns. The Crown of Thorns was not a narrow circlet of thorns but a cap of thorns.



Detail of the back of Christ with the marks of the Roman "flagrum." Christ was scourged by Roman soldiers and the Roman Law did not limit the blows.



Detail of the blood-stain from the wound of the nail in the feet. One nail was used to fasten the feet to the cross—left foot over the right.



formed the brown stain, graduated according to the contours of the body. All other theories retain aloes as the basis of the explanation.

Altogether, then, the Gospel account of the burial of Christ is of the highest significance in identifying the Man of the Shroud. St. John's text is proposed as an insuperable objection against the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin only at the cost of distorting the meaning of his terms and contradicting his statement that the Body of Christ was wrapped in the burial linen according to the custom of the Jews.

### Under the Dominion of Death

Christ remained in the tomb from about six o'clock on Friday evening till some time before dawn on Sunday morning. We can assume at most about thirty-six hours. During this time His Body was in a perfectly natural state, subject to the action of natural forces. Had it remained in the tomb long enough, it would have corrupted like any other human body. This condition came to an end and the body entered into an incorruptible state only at the moment of the resurrection.

As was stated above, the imprints on the Shroud show the effects of the natural post-mortem process in the exudation of many small drops from the pores. This evidently took place hours after the body was enveloped in the Shroud.

There are those who have been scandalized by the statement that the Body of Christ was corruptible while it reposed in the tomb. If they were consistent, they would say that it became incorruptible at the moment of death—an idea that is hardly tenable, scripturally or theologically. The corruptibility of that sacred body in the state of death pertains to the mystery of the Incarnation and the Redemption as much as the fact that the same body was passible and mortal during life.

The Son of God assumed a human body that was in the same condition in which ours is in consequence of sin, in order that He might sacrifice Himself through the offering of His Body in propitiation for the sins of the world (Rom. 8:3; Hebr. 10:5-10). When His sacrifice was consummated, He left His Body temporarily under the dominion of death, "sown in corruption that it might rise in incorruption, sown in dishonor, that it might rise in glory, sown in



weakness that it might rise in power, sown a natural body that it might rise a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:42-44). This is the doctrine of St. Paul. Like the bodies of the just, who are assured of a glorious resurrection, the dead body of Christ was a natural, corruptible body which became immortal and incorruptible at the moment when He rose from the tomb: "Christ having risen from the dead, dies now no more, death shall no longer have dominion over him" (Rom. 6:9). Till that moment the Son of God chose to submit to the laws of death, that in the fullest sense of the word He Himself might become "the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by a man came death, by a man also comes the resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:20-21).

Hence, one should not be disturbed by the corruptibility of the Body of Christ in the tomb. The divine plan of human redemption demanded it. Nor should one be disturbed by the fact that the imprints on the Shroud show the effects of the natural post-mortem process. It is only a preliminary stage that is indicated there, and it really proves that there actually was no corruption of the Body of Christ. There is no trace of the gases or liquids that would have resulted from the decomposition of the tissues. And the first effects of the post-mortem process ceased abruptly at a certain moment because then the body departed from the Shroud.

So far from being a difficulty, the evidence of post-mortem action upon the Shroud is a striking proof of the genuineness of the imprints and of their complete harmony with the most profound aspects of the mystery of Christ.

### The Time Element

How long was the body enveloped in the Shroud? There are many factors to be considered and some of them are not very well understood, since we are dealing with an exceptional case that occurred nineteen centuries ago.

Under the circumstances, how long did it take for the stain images to form? There were different forces involved and it seems practically impossible to reproduce them by experiment. How long did it take for the clotted blood to redissolve sufficiently to be impressed so completely on the cloth? How long did it take for the serous exudation from the pores to begin, and how long was it in progress? These



questions cannot be answered very exactly. Nor can one say with any assurance what was the temperature and the degree of moisture in the tomb and what part these factors may have played. The temperature of the body itself may have contributed to the result, and of course there is no way of telling what the bodily temperature was. Finally, what toxic products may have been secreted in the body during the long and varied torture, and how may they have affected the tone of the tissues and the different processes involved in the production of the imprints?

The most that one can say on the basis of experiments and observations, is that the whole complicated process required at least twenty-four hours, and that it could hardly have lasted more than forty-eight. In view of the subject we are dealing with, this is approximate enough to be reckoned among the details which serve to identify the Man of the Shroud.

### After-light of the Resurrection

How did the body emerge from the Shroud at the right moment, when the two figures were perfectly formed with all their precise and varied details, and before corruption began? Vignon labored at this problem on the hypothesis that some human agent had removed the sheet. In the end he surrendered and called the attention of Science to a challenge of the Shroud: "Explain if you can how this sheet was separated from the body it had enveloped."

It was those extremely precise impressions of blood that created the difficulty. Remember, this blood had already clotted on the body. It had to be partially redissolved to be impressed on the Shroud, and it is there now entirely intact and with incredible exactness. Vignon succeeded in obtaining similar transfers of clotted blood, but never any as complete or precise as those on the Shroud. It was too difficult to time the process exactly, and he could never remove the cloth without disturbing the blood, although he worked under laboratory conditions with small quantities of blood, and with small pieces of cloth of a texture specially chosen for the purpose.

Now here is a fourteen foot sheet which was originally longer, and this sheet retains complete and perfect transfers of clotted blood, varied in form, much of it extensive in area, and originally located



on different parts of a human body. From his own experience Vignon was convinced that no human agent could have removed the frontal half of the sheet without destroying the extreme precision of the two trickles on the back of the left hand, the streams on the forearms, the large clot on the right side, and the clots and streams on the brow and the hair.

But suppose that the frontal half of the sheet had been successfully removed—there was the body still lying on the lower half, where there are the many trickles at the back of the head, the blood on the soles of the feet, and the two intertwining streams across the loins beginning and ending with a large pool of blood and serum. Lift the body off the sheet? Turn it over and lift the sheet off the body? The thing was plainly impossible if that whole array of decalcomanias of blood was to be retained intact with the precision it has on the Shroud.

So there was the challenge of the Shroud to Science: "... and if in the end you must confess that it is beyond your powers to explain how my mysterious guest departed, you will still have made a great discovery."

Christians, of course, know the answer. In fact, this and other "mysteries" of the Shroud seem natural enough to those who realize what this cloth is and whose blood it bears. For them, these "mysteries" are a confirmation of the authenticity of the Shroud for the very reason that they are inexplicable unless they be a distant after-light of the resurrection of Christ.

Does this seem fantastic to you? Study the problem with guides like Vignon and Barbet, and perhaps you too will be conquered as was Dr. Hovelacque, Professor of Anatomy in the Faculty of Medicine at Paris, who was far from being a Christian. After reading Barbet's *Les Cinq Plaies*, he meditated in silence and finally broke forth with the exclamation: "But then . . . then Jesus Christ rose from the dead!"

## It Is I

Through the Shroud, then, Christ presents the same proof of identity that He presented to the disciples when He appeared to them after the resurrection: "See my hands and feet, that it is I myself" (Luke 24:39). "He showed them his hands and his side" (John 20:20), and He met the demand of the doubting Thomas: "Bring



here thy finger, and see my hands; and bring here thy hand, and put it into my side; and be not unbelieving, but believing" (John 20:27).

Though the risen Saviour retained His major wounds, His flesh was otherwise restored to the integrity that befitted the state of glory in which He had risen. The disfigurements of the face, the punctures about the head, the lacerations and the bruises of the scourging, the excoriations from the carrying of the cross—all these were erased when a new life surged through His Body; but He left their imprints upon the Shroud, together with the marks of the nails and the spear. And with the imprints of the wounds He left a portrait of Himself as He was before His flesh was transfigured by the glory of the resurrection.

This is the image that Christ chose to leave to the world, and in that awe-inspiring image He rises again before our eyes and renews the appeal of old: "See all these wounds that I bore for love of you, see this blood which I shed in atonement for your sins . . . and know that it is I."

## CHAPTER IX

# The Fifth Gospel

VIGOROUS objection has been made to calling the Shroud of Turin "the Fifth Gospel." One can readily understand that this term offends those who still believe that the Shroud is a painting, done with fraudulent intent fourteen centuries after Christ, but such critics would surely abandon their objection if they realized how conclusive is the proof of the authenticity of the Shroud. In fact, they would admit that the Shroud is most appropriately called "the Fifth Gospel."

## Tableau of the Passion

The term is obviously meant in a metaphorical sense, as the frescoes of Raphael in the Vatican are called the pictorial Bible, and the facade of the cathedral of Orvieto is called the sculptured Bible. Nor is it anything new to describe the Shroud in similar terms. It has been done for centuries, and not merely by imaginative poets or by the lowly folk who may have a surer instinct than the critical scholar, but by serious theologians and pulpit orators, even by Bishops. The most impressive example of all is the Mass and Office of the Holy Shroud. There the Church herself, in her most solemn liturgical acts, describes the Shroud in the most vivid terms as an ever-present replica of the Passion—and the Church means the Shroud of Turin, not just the burial cloth of Christ as known through the Gospels.

Nobody in his right mind would think of putting the Shroud in the same category with the four Gospels; but one who realizes its authenticity will naturally regard it as an accurate illustration of the most sublime pages written by the Evangelists. What better illustration could there be? And what surer guide for Christian Art in its noble function of portraying the realities of Faith in concrete form? If some great artist were to reconstruct each scene of the Passion from the data of the Shroud, we would have a series of tableaux that



might worthily accompany the sacred text. We would also have a Way of the Cross which the most exacting scholar could follow without offense to his zeal for scriptural and historical accuracy.

## Appendix to the Gospels

Not only does the Shroud illustrate the Gospels, it supplements them. This statement also has been denounced as an outrageous exaggeration. The protest is made by biblical scholars who hoard every item of history and archaeology which may throw even a glimmer on the meaning of the sacred text. Here they have before their very eyes a source of the most accurate and most authentic information which complete the story of the Passion, the Burial and the Resurrection of Christ—precisely those parts of the Gospels which contain the very heart of the mystery of the Redemption. But our biblical scholars thrust all this aside as spurious, and go on painfully picking out a faint hint here and a stray suggestion there from more remote and less reliable sources.

One is tempted to paraphrase the words with which the agnostic Delage characterized the attitude of the first adversaries: "If, instead of the Shroud of Christ, there were question of some archaeological find like a Greek statue, a Roman sarcophagus, or an Egyptian mummy, no one would have raised any objection."

The Shroud supplements the Gospels somewhat as a photograph supplements a concise verbal description. The Gospels tell us that Christ was struck in the face. The Shroud shows us the bruises and swellings, the dislocated nose, the contracted eyelid. The Gospels say simply that Christ was scourged. The Shroud brings the scourging itself before our eyes. We can reconstruct the scourge and almost count the blows in the marks of the stripes, the lacerations and the contusions. They placed a plaited crown of thorns upon His head, say the Gospels. The Shroud shows us, not the crown, but the more realistic punctures and bleeding all about the head. The Gospels say only that Christ carried His cross. The Shroud depicts Him bent under the transverse beam lying across the shoulders, with His outstretched arms bound to the instrument of His death. And there are the excoriations on the shoulder-blades, the oozing and the aggravated wounds of the scourging.



He was crucified, is all the Evangelists say of the awful climax of the drama. The Shroud re-enacts the scene. It raises the arms of Christ to the angle at which they were extended on the cross. It shows the point where the hands were pierced, and how the fingers and thumbs responded to the pressure on the median nerve. It crosses the feet and shows how they were pierced with a single nail through the insteps, how the wounds bled at the beginning of the crucifixion, how they bled again when the nail was extracted. It reconstructs the position in which the body was left by death, because the body grew rigid on the cross and remained so while impressing its image on the Shroud.

There is also the final outrage committed upon that sacred Body. The Shroud evokes the vision of the soldier plunging his spear into the right side between the fifth and the sixth rib. It shows us the very wound into which Thomas was invited to thrust his hand, and it almost analyses the issue of blood and water which was such a marvel to John.

And the burial which has been so much disputed in recent years—the Shroud takes us back to the tomb and shows us exactly what was done—the washing and the anointing omitted, the jaw bound up with a chin-band, the body wrapped in the long linen sheet folded over the head.

## The Author

And whence does all this come? Not from the imagination of any artist, not from the laborious research of any exegete or archaeologist among the remnants of antiquity. It is the work of Him whose Spirit illuminated the minds and moved the pens of the Evangelists, and who was Himself the protagonist of the drama they describe so concisely. It is He who traced this pictorial history of the Passion in a style that only He could command. And He sealed and signed His work with His own Blood, which remains as a guarantee of His authorship, as a token of His resurrection, and as a pledge of a new life to us, given at the moment when He abandoned our mortal condition and departed from the embrace of His winding-sheet.

Yes, the Shroud of Turin is the Fifth Gospel, and the pity is that there are still so many who repudiate it as a forgery.



## CHAPTER X

# The Artistic Lineage of the Shroud

ONCE IT IS proved that the two figures on the Shroud are the imprints of a corpse, the Gospels provide a sure historical basis for identifying them as the imprints of Christ. Beyond that, what do we know of the intervening history of the Shroud?

From 1389 onwards we have a clear and continuous history. We know that our present Shroud was placed in the church at Lirey about 1354, but we do not know how it came to Lirey, nor are there any documents whereby we can trace its earlier history. However, we now have good reason to believe that it is the same as the relic that was at Constantinople till 1204.

Robert de Clary, a knight of Picardy who took part in the Fourth Crusade and wrote its history, relates that "the Shroud in which Our Lord was enveloped" was in the church of Our Lady of Blachernes, a suburb of Constantinople, and that it was there exposed every Friday, "stretched upright so that all could clearly see the figure of Our Lord."

We do not know when the Shroud was brought to Constantinople. It was there in 1171, and was then kept in the private chambers of the Emperor, which even the most distinguished visitors were allowed to enter only on the rarest occasions. The Shroud, however, does not seem to have been shown even to the personal guests of the Emperor.

In 1201 the Shroud was in the imperial chapel of St. Mary of the Pharos. Here, too, it seems to have been withheld from view. The practice of exposing it to the public every Friday apparently began only after its transfer to the church of Our Lady of Blachernes.

Constantinople was sacked by the crusaders in 1204. "No one," continues Robert de Clary, "neither Greek nor Frank, ever knew what became of the Shroud when the city was taken."

There is no written record that connects the Shroud of Lirey-



Chambery-Turin with the relic that vanished from Constantinople. Their identity is affirmed on the basis of a comparative iconographic study by Paul Vignon.

## The Iconography of the Holy Face

From a minute study of hundreds of paintings, frescoes and mosaics, Vignon discovered that many of them reproduce certain peculiarities of the imprint of the face on the Shroud. The artists eliminated the marks of wounds and blood, and attempted to translate the stain image into a living face. They naturally made many mistakes in constructing a positive picture from the negative imprint, which was completely beyond their comprehension; but they faithfully copied certain details of the imprint, although these appear to be anomalies which no artist would ever introduce into a picture of the human countenance unless he had a compelling reason.

Among these oddities of the imprint are the following: the absence of ears, neck and shoulders; the two-pointed beard and the two long strands of hair, each differently formed; a large capital T formed of the frontal arches and the nose, and more minute peculiarities of the cross-bar and the stem of the T; the distorted appearance of the nose, swollen at the bridge, with the lower part bent to the right; above the nose a square open at the top, and above this a curved transverse stain and a shadow due to a bruise; the abnormal shading of the swollen right cheek; on the left cheek a sheaf of demi-tints in the form of a fan; the pronounced slanting furrow at the right of the nose; the mustache truncated at both ends and at different angles; the groove between the two halves of the mustache; the formation of the mouth and the shape of the shadow on the bare upper part of the chin.

There is no single art work in which all these peculiarities of the imprint of the face are to be seen together. Different details appear in different works, some more frequently than others. Many of these works were not derived directly from the Shroud, but indirectly through an earlier copy. Some of them are particularly notable for the minute exactness with which they reproduce some of the anomalies of the Shroud—an exactness which would have been impossible unless the artists had the imprint of the face before their eyes. One



of these is the Holy Face of Laon in France—a glazed panel painted at Constantinople between 1201 and 1204, the period when “the Shroud in which Our Lord was enveloped” was kept at Our Lady of Blachernes, and was shown to the public every Friday “so that all could clearly see the figure of Our Lord.”

The Holy Face of Laon is at hand to complete the account of Robert de Clary. Though neither Greek nor Frank knew what became of the Shroud which vanished in the pillage of Constantinople in 1204, we know now that it appeared again at Lirey about 1354, and that it is now enshrined in the Royal Chapel in Turin.

Vignon traces the artistic lineage of the Shroud back to the fifth century, where he finds the Holy Face of Edessa as the first work in which distinctive peculiarities of the imprint of the face appeared. Venerated as an *achiropoeton*, the image of Edessa was ceded by Baudouin II to St. Louis, who deposited it in the Sainte Chapelle at Paris in 1247. It was no longer to be found after the riotings of the French Revolution in 1790, but there remain many copies and adaptations in which details of the Shroud are reproduced.

### The Erring Iconoclasts

Vignon's iconographic thesis has been severely criticized. This was to be expected. The thesis is entirely new and unfamiliar even to students of the history of Christian Art. It is rather complicated and not easily understood, and it demands careful study of minute details and constant comparison between the stain image on the Shroud and the many art works reproduced by Vignon. It is not likely that the opponents would take that much trouble if they were already convinced that the Shroud is a painting of the fourteenth century, and that the photographs of the Shroud are scientifically worthless. They have not even grasped Vignon's aim and method. They think he has tried to show that the *features* of the Holy Faces in art are the same as the *positive* image of the face revealed by the photograph of the Shroud! With such a grotesque misconception, it is easy for them to scoff at his efforts and to ridicule his conclusions.

One critic who has tried to be more objective, discards Vignon's whole thesis because, he says, not all the peculiarities of the imprint of the face are to be found in any one art work. Neither has he under-



stood the nature of the argument. Vignon's point is that each one of these details is distinctive of the imprint, so that the presence of even a few in any art work is sufficient to establish a relationship with the Shroud. He also maintains that the presence of all the distinctive details of the imprint of the face in many different art works taken together, which extend over more than seven centuries, proves that it was the canon of the Shroud that the artists obeyed in various degrees and usually with almost slavish fidelity.

The attitude of the critics again suggests a paraphrase of Delage: "If, instead of the genuine imprint of the face of Christ, there were question of a portrait of Cicero, of Caesar Augustus, or of one of the Greek philosophers, no one would have made any objection."

### The Verdict of History

Others have passed a more favorable judgment upon Vignon's iconographic thesis.

Before publishing his book, Vignon presented his material in a series of illustrated lectures before a very critical audience in Paris and submitted it to free discussion. The final consensus was that, in substance, the thesis is solidly established.

The official organ of the Bureau des Constatations of Lourdes, the commission of physicians for verifying cures, besides endorsing the medico-legal proof of the authenticity of the Shroud, granted that Vignon's iconographic thesis successfully dates the Shroud in the fifth century.

Paul Claudel, himself no mean art critic, also subscribed the iconographic thesis and declared that it is not the least impressive part of the proof of the authenticity of the Shroud.

Maurice d'Ocagne, a member of the Academy of Sciences, was convinced that the Shroud was copied from the fifth century onwards. This, he said, is proven by the minute fidelity with which typical details of the imprint of the face are reproduced, although the artists were utterly incapable of understanding the nature of the image as a negative.

Guillain de Bénouville accepted the thesis without reserve. The characteristics of the Shroud, he wrote, or rather the same errors in interpreting the negative imprint, are present in a whole sequence of



art works, and they prove that the Shroud existed in the early centuries of the Christian era. Vignon's iconographic study, he adds, is an admirable work both from the historical and the artistic point of view, and contributes a magnificent chapter to the history of art.

It also contributes an illuminating chapter to the history of the Shroud. This is really the voice of History speaking through the artistic offspring of the sacred imprint. It still leaves many obscurities about the fortunes and the peregrinations of the Shroud through the centuries, but these gaps in the record we can accept in perfect peace, for History speaks its decisive word through the Gospels, where it describes the sublime reality of which the Shroud is the undeniable replica.

## CHAPTER XI

# The Case Against the Shroud

WHAT REALLY is the case against the Shroud of Turin at present? What are the arguments that still convince most Catholic historians, exegetes and theologians that this is a false relic?

About fifteen years ago a German scholar, recognized as a great antiquarian and orientalist, told me that in learned circles in Germany it was taken for granted that the Shroud of Turin is spurious and not worth a moment's serious attention. That was about seven years after the exposition of 1931, when the Shroud was examined and Enrie made the splendid new photographs. Why were the German scholars still so sure that the Shroud is a forgery? It was not because they had weighed the new evidence and found it wanting. According to my informant, it was because they believed that Joseph Braun, S.J., in his article in *Stimmen aus Maria Laach*, had conclusively proven the Shroud to be a fraud. That article appeared in 1902. It is composed of an exposition of Chevalier's historical thesis, the common interpretation of the Gospel account of the burial of Christ, and the hypothesis with which the first opponents tried to combat the scientific defense of the Shroud by Vignon and Delage.

## The Same as Fifty Years Ago

Father Braun's article is still cited as a conclusive refutation of the authenticity of the Shroud. So are the writings of Baumgarten, Thurston, Chopin, De Mely, Donnadieu, above all Chevalier—all the old adversaries who warred against the Shroud at the beginning of this century. This is very significant. It means that the case against the Shroud is the same today as it was fifty years ago. The present opponents, whether in Germany or in any other country, have not brought forth a single new argument, nor have they in any way strengthened the old ones.

An illuminating example is the brochure *Das Turiner Grablinnen und die Wissenschaft*, published in 1952 and praised by reviewers



as a work of exact scholarship. The author, a Professor of New Testament Science, tells his readers that he had studied the question for sixteen years. One has the impression that he spent more time in searching the works of former adversaries for objections against the Shroud than in studying the present state of the question. At any rate, he fails completely to grasp the real case in favor of the Shroud, while he manages to compress most of the old objections into his fifty-six pages. In the course of his exposition he implies repeatedly, and not too subtly, that the defenders of the Shroud are fools or fanatics, and he concludes with magnificent assurance: "In any case, these people cannot appeal to Science. That should now be clear. So far as Science is concerned, the problem is no longer an open question which might be answered one way or the other. For one who considers himself bound by the laws of scientific investigation, the material brought together by historical research, by exegesis, and to a certain extent by the history of art, taken all together, signifies the methodically conclusive demonstration of the spuriousness of the Shroud."

This little work could have been written by Chevalier, Baumgarten, Joseph Braun, or any other author who distinguished himself by his opposition to the Shroud in the early 1900's.

I repeat, the case against the Shroud is the same today as it was half a century ago. At that time not all the evidence had yet been brought into court, and even at that the defense of the Shroud had triumphantly withstood every attack. Today the authenticity of the Shroud is completely vindicated by new and more conclusive evidence, whereas the opponents still have nothing more to offer than Chevalier's discredited historical thesis, a false interpretation of John's account of the burial, and some naïve hypotheses which are either irrelevant or contrary to the luminous evidence visible upon the Shroud.

### Chevalier's Historical Thesis

All the opponents still believe that Chevalier gave a decisive historical refutation of the authenticity of the Shroud. They are thereby doomed to hold that the Shroud is a painting of the middle of the fourteenth century. Here are fifty documents to prove it, Chevalier boasted (this is the correct word). Fifty documents! echo his dis-



ciples, and with that the question is supposed to be closed. If they took the trouble to analyze and classify the documents in Chevalier's exhibit, they would be surprised to find that the impressive number of fifty dwindles to a more modest four, so far as ostensible proof of the point at issue is concerned. And these four finally dwindle almost to the vanishing point with one—one only, and that not a very impressive piece of historical evidence.

Eight of the documents do not even mention the Shroud. Five refer to it without saying anything of the origin or the nature of the image. Eight are at best ambiguous. One is an extract from another document listed. Four are duplicates of other entries. Five are merely an archivist's notation of contents on the outside of as many dossiers. One is a satirical extract from Calvin's treatise on relics. And fourteen—note this—fourteen are definitely in favor of the authenticity of the Shroud. They refer to it without qualification as the Shroud of Christ, or speak of the image as the imprint of His Body.

Chevalier, a learned and diligent compiler rather than a deep thinker, seems to have forgotten what he was trying to prove, and he was surely nodding when he wrote: "All the documents are favorable to the thesis of the non-authenticity of the Shroud; not one is opposed to it."

There remain four documents, and these declare explicitly that the Shroud is a painting.

One, dated in 1389, is a report by the Bailiff of Troyes, who was commissioned to seize the Shroud in the name of the King. The order was issued at the request of Pierre d'Arcis, Bishop of Troyes, who had been trying in vain to put a stop to public expositions of the Shroud at Lirey. The Bailiff merely records the reason alleged by Pierre d'Arcis for demanding the seizure. He is not an independent witness.

Two of the remaining documents, dated in 1390, are decrees of Clement VII, the first Antipope of Avignon and author of the Western Schism. Clement closed the dispute between the Canons of Lirey and the Bishop of Troyes by allowing the public expositions to continue, but on condition that all ceremonies be omitted, and that it be announced each time that this is not the true Shroud of Christ, but a painting or picture made to represent it. With regard to the nature



of the image, Clement simply accepted the word of Pierre d'Arcis, so neither is he an independent witness.

In the end, Chevalier's entire case depends upon the testimony of Pierre d'Arcis. What is it worth on this particular point?

First, Pierre d'Arcis does not speak from personal knowledge. From the documents it seems clear that he himself never saw the Shroud, nor did he have it examined by others.

Secondly, we have no direct testimony from Pierre d'Arcis to the effect that the Shroud was painted. We know his opinion only indirectly through the three documents just cited—unless the one remaining document in Chevalier's collection be from his pen.

This is ostensibly the rough draft of a letter (the letter itself has not been found) which the Bishop of Troyes is supposed to have sent to the Antipope at Avignon. In this memorandum it is stated that Henri de Poitiers, a predecessor of Pierre d'Arcis in the See of Troyes, thrice removed, conducted an investigation about the year 1354 and discovered an artist who confessed that he had painted the Shroud.

This document is unsigned and undated, and there exists only a late copy, but the disciples of Chevalier fret and fume at any attempt to question the authenticity of the document. This is their trump card and they will tolerate no tampering with it. Very well, let them have it their way. Let it be granted that the memorandum was written by the Bishop of Troyes in 1389. It is no credit to His Excellency.

The document is written in barbarous Latin; it is violent and incoherent in tone, abounding in obvious exaggerations, blemished by bad logic and bad Theology, reckless in imputing the gravest crimes against truth, justice and religion to the Canons of Lirey who are known historically to have been pious and honorable ecclesiastics.

Now Chevalier himself admits that this is the only document which mentions an investigation by Henri de Poitiers and the discovery of an artist who allegedly confessed to having painted the Shroud. In fact, Chevalier admits that this document is the only source from which we can know anything about the history of the Shroud at Lirey before 1389. With that, he practically surrenders his whole case. His one basic document is not the sort that one accepts without confirmation as reliable historical testimony. Moreover, in this document itself it is implied that there was no better authority than



popular rumor for asserting that the Shroud was painted and the artist compelled to confess.

There is Chevalier's famous historical thesis, so long and loudly lauded as a model of critical historical research, still accepted on faith by men who are otherwise rigorously exacting in appraising and interpreting historical documents. The defenders of the Shroud have often been ridiculed for their credulity in treating the historical problems it involves. They have hardly been more credulous than those who have so trustfully accepted Chevalier's thesis as a decisive refutation of the authenticity of the Shroud.

Chevalier's thesis now has only an academic interest. We have positive historical evidence that our present Shroud existed in the fifth century, and that it was at Constantinople from some time before 1171 till 1204. Scientifically, it is certain that the two figures on the Shroud are the spontaneous imprints of a human corpse. It is only on this basis that the question of the authenticity of the Shroud can now be discussed.

### A False Reconstruction of the Burial of Christ

In recent years the opponents have been insisting more on the scriptural objection, namely, that the imprints on the Shroud are in conflict with John's account of the burial and the finding of the grave-clothes in the empty tomb. This objection also remains the same as it was fifty years ago, though now it is presented with a more imposing apparatus of references and erudite notes. It is an effort that recalls St. Augustine's dictum: "You take long strides, but in the wrong direction."

The opponents persistently disregard the principles of philology. They propose their personal speculations in place of positive data which really illustrate the meaning of the terms used in the sacred text. In what sense did St. John and the Synoptics use words like *othonion*, *soudarion*, *keiria*, *aloē*, *sindōn*, *eneileō*? One can know this only by studying the sources which illustrate the contemporary usage: other passages in the Bible, the earliest commentaries and translations of the Gospels, especially the Syriac, the apocryphal writings, the papyri, classical literature. The results of this study are quite different from what the opponents imagine. They bring into



clearer relief the harmony of the Shroud with the Gospels, particularly with the text of John, while they show how far the interpretation of the opponents departs from the real meaning of the sacred text.

The opponents also violate one of the most elementary rules of hermeneutics: "Take the whole context and strive to expound the objective meaning." Refrain from imposing on the text any preconceived notion of your own.

St. John says that the Body of Christ was wrapped in the linen cloths "according to the custom of the Jews in preparing (the dead) for burial." What was the Jewish custom? The opponents have neglected to look into that question, if they even noticed that significant phrase of St. John which supplies the key to the whole problem of the burial linen. This problem can be solved only by searching the sources which tell us how the ancient Jews clothed their dead: a few allusions in the Bible, the Jewish and the Christian apocrypha, the Syriac textual tradition and the commentaries of St. Ephrem, and a whole mass of rabbinical literature. Not one of the opponents has taken the trouble to make this research. Instead, they all assume that it was the Jewish custom in the Gospel era to cover the face of the dead with a napkin, and to bind the body from head to foot with swathing-bands, as the Egyptians did with their mummies. Some of them will not even admit that there was a winding-sheet; or if there was, they maintain that it was torn up into strips to be used as swathing-bands.

In effect, the opponents contradict St. John. He says the Body of Christ was wrapped in the burial linen according to the custom of the Jews. They say: No, it was according to the custom of the Egyptians—a sufficiently incongruous idea. The Jews were not at all interested in preserving the bodies of the dead in their natural form, which was the purpose of the layers of complicated swathings of the Egyptian mummies, after exvisceration and long treatment in a natron bath. The Jews simply wrapped their dead in a shroud or clothed them in ordinary garments and left them to decay in the tomb.

St. John says it was according to the custom of the Jews that the Body of Christ was wrapped in the burial linen along with the spices—just these two details. The opponents assume that he describes a definitive burial with the observance of all the customary rites, including washing and anointing. Again, this is not interpretation of



the text, and it comes dangerously near to bringing St. John into conflict with the Synoptics.

St. John mentions aloes as an ingredient of the mixture of spices. All modern commentators say this was not the true medicinal aloes, but the aromatic wood of an East Indian tree known as lignaloës. The opponents insist on this almost to distraction because they think it is an unanswerable objection against the authenticity of the Shroud. They think so only because they accept a false interpretation of St. John, and because they confuse the thesis of the authenticity of the Shroud with the vaporograph theory.

The vaporograph theory postulates medicinal aloes as the substance which reacted with ammoniac vapors in the production of the two stain images. The aromatic lignaloës does not have this reaction. Vignon demonstrated this experimentally, not any of the opponents, but the latter have been featuring it ever since as if the whole case for the Shroud were thereby ruined. They are mistaken for three reasons.

First, the vaporograph theory is proposed only as a probable and partial explanation of the process by which the two stain images were produced—a question which arises only after it has been established that the stain images are the imprints of a human corpse which is identified as the Body of Christ. If the vaporograph theory were ever disproved, the case for the authenticity of the Shroud would not suffer in the least.

Secondly, St. John could not have meant the aromatic lignaloës. The name of that substance was *xylaloë*, a late Greek term which occurs for the first time in the writings of Aetius, a Greek physician who flourished at Alexandria towards the end of the fifth century. St. John did not even know that word. He used the word *aloë*, which never meant anything else than the medicinal aloes, the meaning that it has in all the medical and botanical writings before and after Christ.

Till the seventeenth century all commentators held that *aloë* in St. John's text meant the medicinal aloes. Claude Saumaise (1588-1653) was the first one who interpreted the word as meaning lignaloës. He admitted that this was contrary to the unanimous tradition that had prevailed till then, but he followed a false theory of his own and by some strange quirk his erroneous interpretation has been universally accepted as unquestionable.



Thirdly, it is an error to suppose that the Jews treated the bodies of the dead with aromatic substances in order to counteract the odor of decay. There was no reason why they should have taken such a precaution, which would have been futile anyhow. In New Testament times they closed the tomb permanently as soon as the burial rites were completed.

The spices which the Jews applied to the bodies of the dead were intended to be preservatives—a practice inspired by the popular belief that the soul hovered about the body till the first signs of decay appeared. Myrrh and aloes were regarded as appropriate for such a purpose. They were commonly used in ancient medicine for analogous purposes, as desiccatives and antiseptics to dry suppurating sores and to counteract infection. In such treatments both were frequently used together, as we know from the writings of Hippocrates, Galen, Dioscorides, Celsus, and the medical works of the Egyptians.

As for preserving corpses from corruption, both myrrh and aloes have been identified by chemical analysis among the preservative substances in Egyptian mummies. With regard to burials where there was no mummification, as was the case among all Semitic peoples, Mesue (776-885), chief physician of the Calif Haroun-al-Raschid, gives us what may be regarded as a commentary on John's text: "Aloes preserves even corpses from corruption, especially when it is combined with myrrh."

It is with the question of the aloes as with that of the burial linen—all the clamorous stir is nothing but sound and fury.

This, then, is how the burial of Christ is reconstructed in an effort to discredit the Shroud of Turin. It is not by studying the text of the Gospels in an objective, impartial spirit and by making serious, independent research. It is rather by indulging in arbitrary speculation, which may not be entirely free from bias, and by accepting blindly an interpretation which anyone can learn in a few minutes from almost any commentary, and the chances are that the commentary will be only a second-hand compilation. The opponents, however, are sure of themselves. They repeat their lesson as confidently as if they were reciting the Creed.

Through his text, illustrated by authentic historical sources, St. John himself corrects them on every point and patiently explains why they are wrong: "You disregard what Matthew, Mark and Luke say.



You distort the meaning of my words. You have not grasped what I meant when I said that the Master was wrapped in the linen with the spices according to the custom of my people, and His. You must learn your lesson over again, and when you have learned it well, you will have no difficulty about the Holy Shroud. You will see that it agrees with my text as faithfully as it does with the Synoptics. I merely complete them, and what I add should make it all the clearer that the Holy Shroud is the linen winding-sheet which I saw as it was wrapped about the sacred remains of the Master, and which convinced me more than anything else that the Master had risen from the dead when I saw it again in the empty tomb."

The opponents really ought to desist from their efforts to create a conflict between the Shroud and St. John's text. They have a different problem. They must justify their own interpretation of St. John, if they can; and if they can, they must show how it is to be reconciled with the account of the Synoptics. If they ever make the attempt, they will find that the Beloved Disciple is too severe a taskmaster to be satisfied with guesswork in place of conscientious research, or with hazardous assumptions that contradict the real meaning of his terms and his emphatic statement about the burial custom of the Jews. Neither will he accept unverified borrowings from others who have not themselves made any independent study of the question, even though they be authors of articles in the *Catholic Encyclopedia*, the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche*, the *Dictionnaire de la Bible*, or the *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*.

## Hypotheses and Fallacies

Besides the historical and the scriptural objection, the opponents have nothing to offer but the old hypotheses and fallacies which presuppose that the two figures on the Shroud are paintings. All their thinking about the Shroud is conditioned by that assumption—so much so indeed that they seem to be incapable of taking an objective view of the case, or of admitting anything in favor of the Shroud, no matter how well established. For the same reason they seem to be disposed to admit almost any objection, no matter how arbitrary or absurd.

There is not a single objection based upon observation of the



Shroud itself. In fact, so far as I know, none of the opponents ever saw the Shroud, yet they are very dogmatic about the nature of the two figures, and they disdainfully dismiss the competent and honorable men who examined the Shroud, some of them even repeatedly—dismiss them as if they were fools incapable of recognizing what they saw, or knaves deliberately deceiving the public.

If any of the opponents ever saw original photographs of the Shroud, they surely did not study them very carefully. None of them really appreciate the significance of those precise replicas which reveal so much more than the eye can detect upon the Shroud itself. The opponents themselves show how little they understand the photographs when they try to eliminate them from the discussion by saying that they are a substitute for the Shroud and cannot serve as a basis of scientific investigation. With that evasion, they imagine that they are rid of those terrible, unimpeachable witnesses to the true nature of the imprints.

In the end, one has the disheartening conviction that the defenders and the opponents of the Shroud are not even meeting on common ground. The former adhere steadfastly to the facts of the case. They speak of the linen sheet preserved in the Royal Chapel at Turin, of the two figures that it bears, of the wealth of evidence which proves them to be the spontaneous imprints of a human corpse, and that the Body of Christ—evidence established by direct examination of the Shroud, demonstrated by the photographs, confirmed by careful research, and ratified by the Gospels. The opponents ignore all this and speak only of a figment of their own imagination, about which they can make any supposition they please. Instead of studying the Shroud in the revealing light of the photographs, they contemplate a fictitious burial scene and keep their gaze fixed on a document of doubtful date and origin, discredited historically and evidently false when confronted with the Shroud. Would they themselves listen to one who denies the existence of the moon because he read a book which “proves” that there is no such satellite in the solar system?

Unfortunately, the cause of the Shroud has been compromised by many who have written on the subject without being properly qualified. It is also to be deplored that the works of some of these authors, of one in particular, have been widely circulated and zealously public-



ized. It is not hard to detect errors of fact, faculty logic, questionable theories, in these works which were better left unwritten. The opponents make capital out of this situation by ascribing to all advocates of the Shroud the errors and the fantasies of these incompetents, and by pretending that they have refuted the whole case for the authenticity of the Shroud by pointing out the failings of its most inept defenders.

One cannot violate the laws of logic with impunity, and there are certain rules of controversy which it is a point of honor to observe.

### A Premature Burial

Some of the opponents themselves are not over-careful about their arguments. For example, an unfortunate blunder of Chevalier's was revived recently and represented as an official repudiation of the Shroud by the Holy See.

In 1903 Chevalier published the statement that Pope Leo XIII had ordered the Congregation of Rites to investigate the question of the authenticity of the Shroud. The Consultors of the Congregation—so Chevalier said—studied all the pros and cons and finally presented their conclusion to the Pope with the two simple words *non sustinetur* (not proven).

In Rome there was no announcement of any decision like this. Chevalier in Paris insinuated that the Pope refrained from taking any public action for fear of offending the royal proprietor of the Shroud. The leader of all modern opponents of the relic of Turin confidently published the alleged decision, assuring his readers that he had it on very good authority, and claiming it as an official confirmation of his own thesis.

The fact is that there was no investigation by the Congregation of Rites. Still less was there any decision against the Shroud. Chevalier had merely been a bit too eager to believe a floating rumor, and too hasty in sharing his belief with the public. It was not the only incident of its kind in the days of heated controversy that followed Delage's lecture before the French Academy and the publication of Vignon's book, when, as Delage said, the injection of a religious question into the discussion of a scientific problem caused feelings to run high and led reason astray.



There is just one thing that is true about the whole affair—the fact that Chevalier was told privately to desist from that sort of attack against the Shroud. As a matter of fact, he never again published anything on the subject, and a promised second edition of his *Etude Critique* never appeared.

The pitiful affair was allowed to rest in well-merited oblivion till 1952, when it was brought out again in *Das Turiner Grablinnen und die Wissenschaft*. Here the story is adorned with the pompous pronouncement of one who identified himself completely with Chevalier in his battle against the Shroud: “Anyone who is familiar with the terminology of the Congregation (of Rites) in answering questions submitted to it, will know that the two words (*non sustinetur*) are equivalent to a solemn, first-class burial.”

The same ancient adversary is quoted as speaking a brief funeral oration over the Shroud in the same pompous style: “The Sindone di Torino celebrated its birthday in the fifties of the fourteenth century. It was borne to the grave with a great cortege and few mourners in the year 1903. Never will it be allowed to rise again.”

The interesting thing is that all this can be taken seriously today. The old adversaries might have been excused for thinking that they had paid the Shroud of Turin the last tribute of a solemn, first-class burial. They might even have been left to their illusion that they had sealed the tomb and posted a secure guard, lest the Shroud be brought forth again and the last imposture be worse than the first. But since then the Shroud has appeared again before all the world with the splendor of its genuineness shining undimmed from the sacred stigmata: “See my hands and feet and side, that it is I.”

## A Clumsy Hoax

One can hardly hope that such opponents will believe even though the Shroud rise from the tomb in which they thought it was so securely sealed. They now have a new variation of an old argument which seems to satisfy them that the Shroud is surely a fraud.

One M. Clement, an artist of Paris, member of the Société Nationale des Beaux-Arts, assumed that the double image on the Shroud is a stain imprint taken from a slightly stylized statue of Christ of the thirteenth or the fourteenth century, and he proposed to show



how the imprint could have been obtained. He took a sculptured head and with cotton simulated two strands of hair, a beard and a mustache. He also placed a wad of cotton over each eye. He then moistened this figure with a tincture of aloes and applied a cloth. He himself aided absorption of the tincture by exerting a slight pressure with his hands over the reliefs, avoiding contact of the cloth with the receding planes. In the resulting imprint the unstained areas representing the cavities contrasted too strongly with the stain representing the reliefs, so the operator gave them a tint by dipping the cloth in a dilute solution of aloes and then wringing it out. Finally, he simulated streams and clots of blood by making tracings and blots with a dark fluid.

The stain image is a negative of the sculptured and padded face, and at first sight one might think that it does not differ much from the imprint of the face on the Shroud, but there is an infinite difference. The positive obtained by photographing Clement's negative is a crude caricature, coarse, expressionless, unsightly, as was bound to be the case with the crude method by which it was produced.

Not only is it a crude caricature, it is also in some ways a fraud. Clement himself through a written statement, and the person to whom he bequeathed his material, avowed that there was no retouching. There was retouching, and apparently also tampering with the image while it was being produced. I point out the tell-tale signs in *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, VII (1945), 417. There in note 31 the reader can find further information about Clement's work.

There are opponents, and they not the least, who regard this dubious achievement as a very likely illustration of the manner in which the two life-size figures on the Shroud were produced. They consider Clement's negative image comparable in every way with the imprint of the face. The photographic inversion, they say, yields a faultless positive with exactly the same modelling.\* If we did not know how Clement's image was produced, says one of them, we would almost believe that we have the Christ of the Shroud before us. And another concludes: since Clement used no means that was not avail-

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\* The positive and negative photographs of Clement's image are reproduced in *Nouvelle Revue Theologique*, LXVII (1940), facing p. 324; in the separate reprint of this article, *Le Linceul de Turin et l'evangile de S. Jean*, facing last page, unnumbered; and in *Das Turiner Grablinnen und die Wissenschaft*, facing p. 33.



able to any artist of the Middle Ages, we cannot admit that it was impossible at that time to produce a picture so perfect as the image on the Shroud.

So they enthuse over this transparent hoax—they who are so exacting in their demands for “scientific” proofs of the authenticity of the Shroud, and who admonish its defenders to check their fancy and to moderate their language in speaking of the matchless, majestic Christ of the Shroud.

Dr. Barbet, who saw Clement’s original, was astonished that learned persons (perhaps too learned to have a sense of humor, he says) could regard as a scientific experiment what after all is only the diverting jest of an artist. But these scholars are really serious about it, and they are exploiting Clement’s “jest” as an argument against the Shroud, which makes one wonder still more.

Even if Clement had succeeded in obtaining a perfect negative of the sculptured face, how could this prove that the imprint on the Shroud was produced in the same way? Clement had an interview with Vignon at the latter’s invitation, but he neglected to bring along his cloth with the stain image. Still, Vignon made him see that it could prove nothing against the Shroud, no matter how perfect it might be as a negative. Clement was embarrassed and replied that he wished only to show how the imprint on the Shroud could be “copied.” We see now by what means and with what results.

The opponents adhere to Clement’s original assumption, namely, that the imprint on the Shroud was taken from a statue of the thirteenth or the fourteenth century. They should first explain where the hypothetical forger could have obtained such a statue. No artist of that period could have painted anything comparable to the positive image of the Christ of the Shroud. It would have been much more difficult to carve anything like it in marble or wood.

Assuming the existence of a statue of the necessary anatomical and aesthetic perfection, a negative image like that on the Shroud could never have been obtained from it by contact alone. As was explained above, the image is so perfectly formed and so finely detailed because it was produced chiefly by vapors acting at a slight distance in obedience to a definite law. Whether or not the vaporograph theory be correct in all its details, the action of vapors cannot



be excluded. Contact alone with a moist statue would have produced a coarse caricature like Clement's stain image.

Finally, granting everything that the argument postulates, the result would have been nothing more than the imprint of an inert statue. The two negative images on the Shroud are the imprints of a corpse, with the direct impressions of wounds, blood, serum, and the effects of the natural post-mortem process.

The argument always comes back to this essential point: the two figures on the Shroud are the spontaneous imprints of a human corpse, independent of all human agency and inimitable by any modern scientific process, to say nothing of the artistic technique of the thirteenth or the fourteenth century. The opponents may ignore the genuineness of these imprints, they may deny it, they may try to explain it away—the imprints remain what they are, belying every effort to misrepresent them, and exposing the futility of this latest attempt to degrade them to the status of a crude forgery.

### A Futile Subterfuge

The opponents have one other argument, and this also is supposed to be very scientific.

There are certain tests that could be made upon the Shroud itself with the prospect of establishing more precisely the nature of the imprints. These tests have not been made, and the opponents are not very reticent about what they think of the omission. The royal proprietor, the ecclesiastical authorities, the defenders of the Shroud, they say, are afraid of what might be revealed.

Now the truth is that it was defenders of the Shroud who were the first to recommend such tests. They have persisted in demanding them, and they have been more definite in their proposals than the opponents. They can be more definite because they understand the problem better. The first of all were the scientists of the Sorbonne while they were making their investigation in 1902, and again through Delage before the French Academy. On the occasion of the exposition of 1931 Vignon and his colleagues proposed a definite program and were prepared to carry it out. In 1939 the congress of the Italian commission, and in 1950 the international congress at Rome, passed resolutions in the same sense. The fact that nothing



has yet been done in this respect, is surely not the fault of the defenders of the Shroud. It depends on the head of the House of Savoy, and we can only await his decision.

In that period that followed the exposition of 1931, King Victor Emmanuel adopted an attitude which was virtually a challenge to those who still refused to acknowledge the authenticity of the Shroud. Now, he said, there is an abundance of new evidence available. Let them study that and appreciate its significance. If they will not admit what the visual examination of the Shroud and the new photographs reveal, they would probably not be convinced by the results of any scientific tests, however conclusive these might be. At that time this was not an unreasonable attitude, but the situation as it has developed since makes it highly advisable that the tests be made.

Meanwhile it remains true that the blood has not been chemically analyzed. There has been no use of the spectroscope, which could identify the substances that compose the imprints. Neither has there been any real microscopic examination, though this could reveal the presence of tissue and blood cells and perhaps other remains of organic matter. Microscopic examination of cross sections of the threads could also show whether or not the stuff is of linen. And now there is a method of radio carbon dating which could determine approximately whether or not the Shroud dates from the beginning of the Christian era.

The opponents also demand X-ray examination to see whether there are opaque pigments upon the Shroud, such as were used in medieval painting; but this would seem to be useless, since the two-fold image is composed of a stain completely absorbed by the fabric. There is no solid deposit of any kind covering the threads, except where there is clotted blood.

The question is not quite as simple as it may appear. Chemical analysis would destroy the blood analyzed. The Carbon 14 test would destroy a section of the fabric. And there may be reason to fear that both the cloth and the imprints might be harmfully affected by prolonged exposure to infra-red and ultra-violet rays. In view of the nature of the object in question, the responsible persons cannot overlook these considerations. They should not, however, regard them as decisive.

Until the proposed tests are made, we must take the case as it



stands, and here the peculiar logic of the opponents comes to light: "Not all possible means have been used to determine the nature of the two figures; therefore nothing has been done in this respect, and we are free to deny everything that is put forth in defense of the Shroud." It is the enlightened scientific spirit of one who would deny the existence of the moon because he never sees more than one and the same half.

The fact is that the whole case for the authenticity of the Shroud remains intact. The evidence thus far established is still true and retains all its force. One cannot escape it by appealing to future tests upon the Shroud, nor can one ignore it if he wishes to discuss the question intelligently and fairly.

Take the aesthetic argument. It is certain that no artist of the fourteenth century could have painted a picture comparable with the positive image of the Christ of the Shroud. In the fourteenth century Western Art was still struggling to free itself from the rigid, conventional Byzantine style. The greatest art was being produced in Italy, and the greatest Italian artists were Cimabue, Giotto and Duccio—masters, to be sure, as Chaucer in the same period was a master of English, but primitives whose efforts at a natural style did not go much beyond a rather naive realism. They had little understanding of the laws of anatomy, perspective and chiaroscuro, and their technique was still awkward and tentative.

But these were Italians who flourished in Italy. The opponents are particularly unfortunate in being compelled by their argument to maintain that the Christ of the Shroud was painted in France, and in the fourteenth century. It was simply impossible, and there is no need of any scientific test upon the Shroud to realize this.

The photographic argument is much more conclusive. That superb portrait of Christ is revealed only by a photograph, which thereby demonstrates that the stain image on the Shroud is a perfect negative. Enough was said above to show that no artist before the era of photography could even have conceived such an image. No artist today can copy that negative with any degree of accuracy. Enrie's photographs are enough to prove this. There is no need of any scientific test upon the Shroud.

Then there is all that varied and precise medico-legal evidence



which provides an argument as scientific as anyone could desire, if science be taken in the sense of exact knowledge based on observation.

The impressions of the different kinds of wounds, the blood undisturbed in its original form and position, the separation of clot and serum, the oozing of serum from the wounds, the difference between bleeding during life and bleeding after death, the post-mortem exudation and its effect upon the stain images and the clotted blood—all this is visible on the Shroud, it is absolutely true to nature, it cannot be counterfeited. All these details coalesce with the two life-size images, and the whole forms a perfect unit—the imprints of the front and the back of a human body, done to death by the various tortures which can still be reconstructed from the imprints.

But how can we be sure of all this without chemical and spectral analysis, without X-ray and microscopic examination? The objection recurs incessantly. It springs from a misconception of the true state of the case, or from a hypercritical attitude of mind which blinds one to the most luminous evidence. One can always ignore the facts and make purely arbitrary hypotheses in the illusion that they are serious arguments.

Take an example from real life. You come upon a human figure lying in the street, rigid and in a rather unnatural position. There is an ugly, ragged fracture at the top of the skull, in the chest a hole that looks like a bullet wound, in the side a gash that makes you think of a stab with a dagger. Upon the figure there is a red liquid which evidently flowed from the fracture of the skull, and the hole in the chest, and the gash in the side. It is now congealed and surrounded by a thin watery fluid.

What is it? A statue or a corpse? A dummy or the body of a victim of murder? Would you say you cannot tell by just looking at the figure? Would you insist on the proper scientific tests before admitting that this is a human body, that the fracture, the hole and the gash are wounds, that the congealed liquid is blood? Would you demand that a chemist analyze the red liquid, and that a laboratory technician X-ray the figure, go over it with a spectroscope and a microscope, and study cross sections of what looks like hair? You are hardly that distrustful of your own eyesight, or that diffident of your own judgment.

Let us say you would at least call a corps of physicians, patholog-

ists and experts in legal medicine, that they may examine the figure with their better trained eyes, and interpret the details in the light of their professional knowledge. Would you accept their verdict if they came to the startling conclusion that this is a human body after all, that these are wounds, this is blood? You would? Then admit the genuineness of the imprints on the Shroud, for that is exactly what has been done with these imprints. Every square inch has been scrutinized, both upon the Shroud itself and in the more revealing photographs, by the physicians, the pathologists and the medico-legal experts of the Italian and the French commission of the Holy Shroud, and by many others not of the commission. Among them are men eminent in their profession and distinguished for their scientific achievements. They are unanimous in affirming that the two figures on the Shroud are the frontal and the dorsal imprints of a human corpse, with the marks of wounds and blood so exact and so true to nature as to astound them.

You can reject their verdict if you like. You can even refuse to look for yourself. But there is one thing you cannot do. You cannot *deny* that these are the imprints of a human corpse—not if you want to be considered “scientific,” or even rational.

So it is not very logical or realistic to ignore the evidence that we have, and to deny the authenticity of the Shroud simply because certain tests have not been made—to say that nothing has been done because not everything has been done. The moon still shines in the heavens, even though we never see the half that is turned away from the earth.



## **Sanctuary of the Holy Shroud**

**Cathedral of St. John the Baptist  
Turin, Italy**



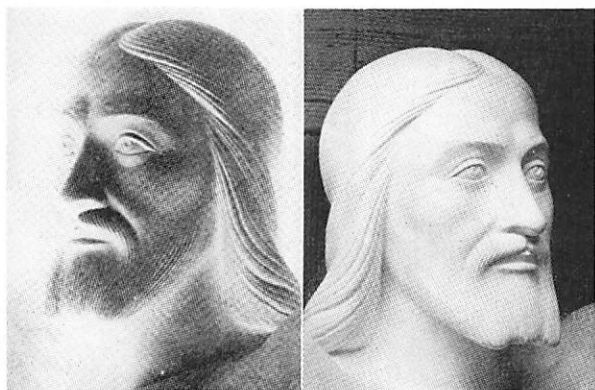
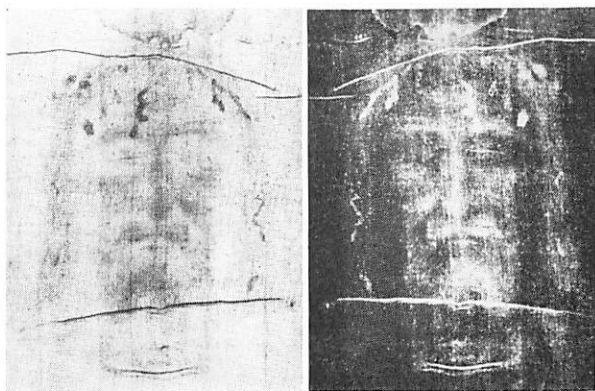


The Holy Shroud is preserved in a silver casket over the altar in the Royal Chapel of the Cathedral in Turin.



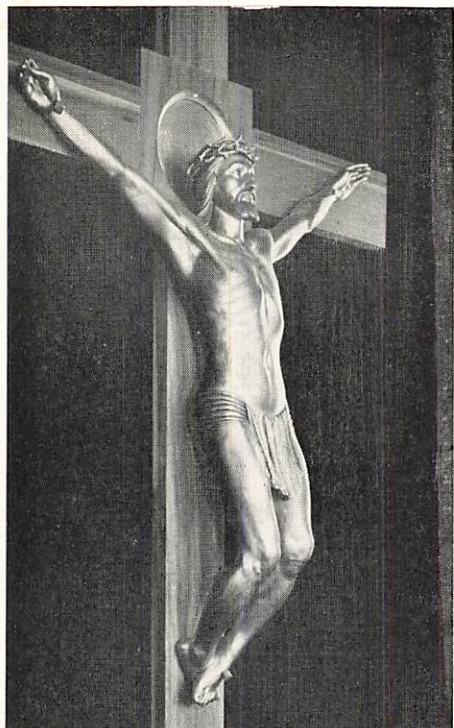
## **negative and positive**

The image on the Shroud is a negative image in which the natural lights and shadows are reversed. Note how impossible it would be to produce a perfect negative without recourse to photography.



**NEGATIVE**

**POSITIVE**

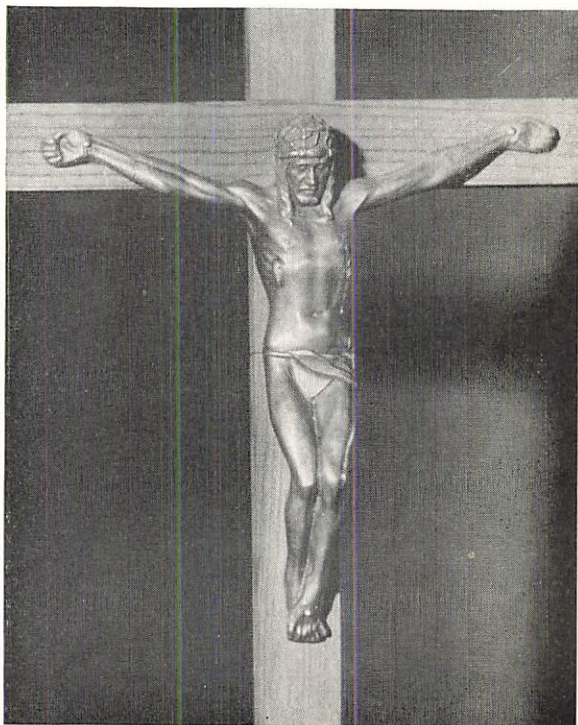


the **SHROUD**

and the **CRUCIFIX**

How was Christ nailed to the Cross?  
Following the clues given by the Holy  
Shroud, scholars have attempted to  
reconstruct a model of the crucifix.

Crucifix as  
conceived by  
Peter Weyland, S.V.D.



Crucifix  
fashioned by  
Dr. Villandre



## CHAPTER XII

# The Popes and the Shroud

THE PRESENT opponents still regard the allegations of Pierre d'Arcis and the decree of the Antipope Clement VII as conclusive proof that the Shroud of Turin is a painting, done with fraudulent intent about the middle of the fourteenth century. There would be little profit in discussing this position any further, were it not for the more than thirty legitimate Popes who have officially recognized the Shroud as authentic. How do these Pontiffs stand in regard to the case of Lirey, and what is the value of their acts and pronouncements?

Chevalier's attempt to evade this issue does him little credit as historian, as canonist, or as theologian: "The Bulls of the Popes to which appeal is made, are all later than the fifteenth century. They are addressed to the sovereigns of Piedmont, at their request, and repeat the tenor of their petitions. One cannot ascribe any historical value to these Pontifical acts, since they contain no trace of critical discussion and no refutation of the earlier documents"—as if there were any trace of critical discussion in the memorandum ascribed to Pierre d'Arcis or in the decree of Clement VII; and as if these documents needed any refutation, once the Shroud itself had been examined. But these two hostile prelates must be vindicated at all costs, even though the cost be misrepresentation of the facts and slander of an illustrious line of legitimate Popes.

The Papal acts in question began more than three decades before the end of the fifteenth century. Many of them are not at all addressed to the Dukes of Piedmont and Savoy, and those that are do not merely repeat the terms of their petitions. That would mean that the Popes were indifferent to the truth of the claims made, and that they granted great spiritual privileges without any justifying reason. All these Pontifical acts really represent a deliberate, independent judgment of the Popes themselves, who affirmed the authenticity of the Shroud and honored it with extraordinary favors because they were convinced that it is truly a relic of the Divine Saviour.



Moreover, the judgment of the Popes was based on an essential factor which both Pierre d'Arcis and Clement VII had neglected—the examination of the Shroud. This took place many times, namely, on occasion of the frequent public expositions at Chambéry and Turin and not a few private expositions. From the Pontifical acts and from the literature of more than three centuries that preceded the photographic revelation of 1898, one can see that there was some understanding of the nature of the two figures insofar as they are not an artifact, but the imprints of a human corpse with the marks of wounds and blood. The official acts of the Popes, therefore, have a historical value which is completely lacking in the acts of the Bishop of Troyes and the Antipope of Avignon. They also have a juridical value which the acts of these two prelates could never have.

It is true that the Papal Bulls and Briefs contain no critical discussion and no refutation of the documents on which Chevalier relied, but this is in accord with the traditional style of the Holy See. It is not the custom of the Popes to discuss the authenticity of relics or to engage in controversy in their official acts. So far as it may be necessary, investigation and critical discussion are done beforehand.

### The Verdict of the Popes on the Affair of Lirey

There is something about all these Papal documents which neither Chevalier nor his followers ever realized or admitted. Although they contain no critical discussion, they do represent a critical judgment of the Holy See, and not only on the authenticity of the Shroud, but also on the charges of Pierre d'Arcis and the decree of Clement VII.

It is important to realize that the affair of Lirey and its sequel in other places were a matter of common knowledge, and that the facts were surely known to the Popes and their advisers. It was a *cause célèbre* which resounded far beyond the diocese of Troyes and the court of Avignon, and developed in three different countries—France, Belgium and Savoy.

The whole issue was again brought before the public in Belgium in 1449, when the Shroud was exhibited at Chimay in the diocese of Liège by Margaret de Charny, granddaughter of Geoffrey I de Charny, who had placed the Shroud in the custody of the Canons of Lirey. Margaret announced that it was the true Shroud with the imprints of



the Saviour. Challenged by the Bishop of Liège to show by what authority she made this claim, she could produce nothing better than the two documents in which the Antipope Clement VII ordered the Canons of Lirey to announce at each public exposition that this is not the true Shroud of Christ, but a painting.

Since 1443 the Canons of Lirey had been conducting a litigation against Margaret de Charny for possession of the Shroud in the civil and ecclesiastical courts of Troyes, Besançon and Dole. After Margaret had placed the Shroud in the hands of Duke Louis I at Chambery, the Canons brought legal action against him. In 1473 they obtained an order from the episcopal court of Troyes against the widow of the Duke for the restoration of the Shroud. It seems to have been only towards the end of the fifteenth century that the Canons finally relinquished their claim.

These developments fostered a wide public interest in the question of the Shroud long after the Western Schism was healed in 1449. The litigation was still going on during the Pontificates of Paul II and Sixtus IV, and during the lifetime of Leo X and Clement VII (of Rome), the first Popes to declare the Shroud authentic and to grant special privileges in its honor.

Nor was the affair of Lirey forgotten. Not only the facts, but the principal documents were featured in the ever-growing literature on the Shroud. The opposition and the charges of Pierre d'Arcis were known. So was the decree of the Antipope Clement VII. The acts of Clement and the whole dossier connected with them were deposited in the Papal Archives at Avignon and later transferred to the Vatican Archives. All these documents could be consulted whenever there was occasion for some official act of the Popes in regard to the Shroud. In view of the curial practice of the Holy See, there is no reason to doubt that they were repeatedly consulted. Neither is there any reason to doubt that the counsellors of the Popes, especially the consultants of the Congregation of Rites, knew the literature which treats of the case of Lirey.

Chevalier, therefore, did not really make the brilliant discovery he is credited with, as if he had brought the affair of Lirey to light after centuries of oblivion. The facts were always known before his not very helpful entry into the modern dispute over the Shroud. Nor was he the first to bring out the pertinent documents in modern times.



A detailed, documented history of the affair of Lirey had already been published by Lalore in 1877, by Loye in 1888, and by Prevost in 1899. Chevalier merely took Lalore's study (contained almost verbatim in Prevost's history) as the nucleus of his *Etude Critique*, which appeared in 1900. His contribution consisted in supplementing the documents cited by Lalore with others which were at best irrelevant, or ambiguous, or contrary to the point he tried to prove. And so he made up that incongruous collection described above, which, as an argument against the authenticity of the Shroud, depends entirely on the discredited testimony of Pierre d'Arcis.

Still, Chevalier himself was naive enough to think, and his followers still think, that the Popes of the past were ignorant of the affair of Lirey, and that they would have refrained from recognizing the Shroud of Turin as a genuine relic of Christ if they had been able to read Chevalier's *Etude Critique*.

Besides the passage already quoted, there is a rather arrogant statement about Benedict XIV which reveals Chevalier's attitude still more clearly.

Prospero Lambertini, who became Benedict XIV (1740-58), had been Promoter of the Faith, the greatest who ever exercised that highly important office in the Congregation of Rites. An eminent jurist and an unrivaled expert in matters of liturgy and cult, he is still revered by the personnel of the Congregation as "the Master." He conducted an investigation of the question of the Shroud and wrote a treatise defending its authenticity, which he published after his elevation to the Papacy. As Pope he endorsed all that his predecessors had done to institute and to extend the public cult of the Shroud, and he himself repeatedly granted generous indulgences for acts of veneration towards the Shroud as a relic of Christ.

It is of this supreme specialist and great Pope that Chevalier was so ill-advised as to write: "In spite of the colossal reputation of Benedict XIV, and his treatise *De servorum Dei beatificatione et canonizatione*, I do not hesitate to say that his affirmations do not constitute a judgment of the Church. Is there not even reason to believe that the reading of the present study (Chevalier's own *Etude Critique*) would have modified his affirmations concerning the Shroud of Turin."

As the time when Chevalier wrote, not only Benedict XIV, but



more than thirty other Popes had been pronouncing the judgment of the Church on the Shroud of Turin for four centuries and a half. They did so in their official acts by which they declared the Shroud to be authentic, recommended it to the devotion of the faithful, instituted and fostered a public cult of the Shroud as a genuine relic of Christ. By each one of these acts the Popes implicitly condemned the charges of Pierre d'Arcis as false and annulled the decree of the Antipope Clement VII as worthless. Thus they also gave the death-blow to Chevalier's thesis before it was even born in the brain of its author.

The Popes who ruled the Church after the publication of Chevalier's thesis, renewed that implicit condemnation by ratifying the acts of their predecessors and re-affirming the authenticity of the relic of Turin on the basis of new evidence which vindicated both the Shroud of Christ and the Vicars of Christ.

In the article "Grabtuch Christi" in the old *Kirchliches Handlexikon* there is this statement: "U. Chevalier established the spuriousness (of the Shroud of Turin); the many rejoinders have not refuted his proofs." This article has been taken over almost verbatim in the *Lexikon für Theologie und Kirche* (2 ed. 1932, vol. IV, col. 636). The statement just quoted remains unchanged, and it has been often featured as an impressive authority even after the discovery of the decisive evidence in 1931.

Chevalier's "proofs," of course, have been refuted by the Shroud itself; but if one wishes to invoke authority in this question, it would be more correct to say: "U. Chevalier attacked the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin; the many Papal pronouncements have nullified his proofs."

## The Value of the Papal Acts

Apart from Chevalier's thesis, what is the value of the official acts of the Popes in regard to the authenticity of the Shroud?

First, they have a negative value insofar as they assure us that there is nothing to prevent us from accepting the Shroud of Turin as authentic, or showing it the supreme veneration due to a genuine relic of Christ—no argument from history, no text of Scripture, nothing that can be observed on the Shroud itself. That leaves the field open to unrestricted research, to free discussion and honest difference of



opinion. The Church, however, expects us to be reasonable, not arbitrary, not prejudiced one way or the other, but judicious if we choose to study the question, and justified by solid arguments if we venture to express a definite opinion.

Have the Papal acts any positive value? Do they give us any real assurance that the Shroud is authentic?

There are two extremes to be avoided. One is represented by the opponents, who deny all value to these official acts of the Popes and even contradict them. The other extreme is to invoke the Papal acts as if they were absolutely decisive and dispensed with the need of studying the many problems involved. These acts of the Popes, even though official, cannot be decisive in that sense because the Popes have no special privilege in such questions. Like all others, they can judge of the authenticity of a relic only by the available evidence. Hence, from a strictly critical point of view, their judgment can be no more valid than the evidence warrants.

In effect, however, the judgment of the Popes on such a question bears far more weight and commands far higher respect than that of any private scholar. The Supreme Pontiffs have able counsellors and research workers at their service. They have an exceptionally grave responsibility, for they speak with a unique authority and their pronouncements have a profound influence in the religious life of the faithful, so that they must be very exacting in their demand for proofs and most circumspect in expressing any judgment. Hence, when they affirm the authenticity of a relic like the Shroud of Turin, it is safe and reasonable to accept their judgment, even though they have no intention of imposing it as a matter of religious belief.

On the other hand, prudence and reverence dictate that one have very strong arguments to the contrary if he wishes to contradict the Popes and maintain that the Shroud is spurious. We saw that there are really no arguments at all to the contrary, so that the opponents find themselves in an unenviable position. They are confronted with the constant, official affirmation of the authenticity of the Shroud by Pope after Pope through nearly five centuries, and by hundreds of Bishops in every generation. To this massive guarantee they can oppose only the false assertion of a Bishop, who was himself a party to the dispute at Lirey, and the inconsistent decree of an Antipope who depended on that interested witness and did not even bother to investigate.



## The Sainte Chapelle

Papal recognition of the Shroud as the true winding-sheet of Christ began with the signal privileges conferred on its sanctuary and its guardians at Chambery.

In 1467 Paul II authorized the Blessed Amedeo IX and his consort Yolandi of France to erect a church in the confines of their castle "for the preservation of certain most precious relics" which were in their possession, and to found a college of Canons and subordinate ministers for the worthy celebration of divine worship.

The Shroud is not mentioned explicitly, but we may be sure that the new church was intended primarily as its sanctuary. Amedeo IX was the son of Duke Louis I, who had received the Shroud in 1453 from Margaret de Charny. It was deposited provisionally in the nearby church of the Franciscans and was there venerated as the true Shroud of Christ while its future abode was in building.

Sixtus IV, in four distinct Bulls (1472-80), confirmed the privileges already conferred on the guardians of the Shroud and granted others. To the Dean he gave the right to officiate with episcopal insignia, and to the Canons the right of precedence over all other ecclesiastics. He also instituted additional offices and provided for the maintenance of the Canons with revenues of certain benefices. Finally, he conferred on the ducal church the title of *Sainte Chapelle*, "principally because of the most glorious Shroud in which Our Lord Jesus Christ was wrapped when He was laid in the tomb."

It was certainly from personal conviction that Sixtus IV, a brilliant theologian and a renowned teacher, affirmed the authenticity of the Shroud. Before his election, he had taken part in a famous dispute as to whether Christ at His resurrection had re-assumed all the blood shed during the Passion. He maintained that the Saviour had left the remnants of His blood upon earth, and pointed to the Shroud at Chambery as one of his proofs: "A similar reason could be adduced regarding the Shroud in which the Body of Christ was wrapped when it was taken down from the cross. This is now preserved with great devotion by the Dukes of Savoy, and it is colored red with the Blood of Christ."

This statement occurs in a treatise on the Blood of Christ, written while the author was still a Cardinal, but published in 1473, two years



after his election as Pope. This was precisely at the time when he was exercising his apostolic authority to pay such exceptional homage to the Shroud at Chambery.

## The Feast of the Holy Shroud

The liturgical privileges granted by the Popes in honor of the Shroud are the most significant of all since they constituted a public cult established and repeatedly confirmed by the supreme authority of the Church.

In 1506 Julius II instituted the feast of the Holy Shroud with its proper Mass and Office, appropriately assigned to May 4, the day following the feast of the Finding of the True Cross.

Julius cites the statement quoted above from the treatise of Sixtus IV on the Blood of Christ. He notes that multitudes of the faithful were drawn by their devotion to venerate the great relic in which they could see the true blood and the image of Jesus Christ. He states also that the Most High wrought many miracles among the devout worshippers.

The Pope instituted the feast with the following solemn formula: "We, therefore, who by divine disposition, albeit unworthily, preside over the ministry of the sacred apostolate, considering that, if we adore and venerate the Holy Cross on which Our Lord Jesus Christ was suspended, and by which we are redeemed, it surely seems fitting and binding upon us to venerate and adore the Shroud on which, as is reported, there are clearly seen the traces of the Humanity of Christ, which the Divinity had united with itself, that is, (there is seen) His very Blood; and desiring that divine worship flourish and increase everywhere, and that the faithful, whom Our Lord Jesus Christ cleansed with His Blood, render devout thanks and praise to the Redeemer and His glorious Mother with solemn festivity . . . (We) approve and confirm the aforesaid day and night Office of the Shroud together with its proper Mass."

The grant of Julius II was only for the Canons of the Sainte Chapelle at Chambery. Leo X extended the feast with its proper Mass and Office to the whole of Savoy. This was confirmed by Clement VII—the legitimate Pope who assumed that title in order to annul its usurpation by the Antipope who had declared the Shroud to be false. The true Clement VII made the contrast complete by confirming every-



thing that his predecessors had granted in recognition of the authenticity of the Shroud. Poetic justice and irony of history!

It was during the Pontificate of Clement VII, in 1532, that the Shroud was damaged by fire in the Sainte Chapelle. The report was spread abroad—among others, by Calvin and Rabelais!—that it had been completely destroyed. Wishing that its preservation be made known, “lest the devotion of the faithful grow cold,” Clement VII commissioned Card. Louis de Gorrevod, Bishop of Maurienne, to make an official identification. He referred to the linen sheet as “the Shroud of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, as is piously believed,” and ordered his Legate to provide for its custody in a fitting place and with due reverence. Any repairs that might be necessary were to be made by nuns chosen by the Cardinal. Here is another striking contrast between the legitimate Clement VII and the Antipope who had ordered the public announcement that “this is not the true Shroud of Christ, but a painting made to represent it.” ✓

In 1582, four years after the transfer of the Shroud to Turin, Gregory XIII extended the feast to the entire realm of the House of Savoy, both to the North and to the South of the Alps. It was a feast of precept with the rank of double of the first class with an octave.

Around 1765-66 the liturgical calendar was reformed and many feasts of precept were suppressed. That of the Holy Shroud survived in all the dioceses of Savoy and Piedmont. It remained also as a feast of precept in territories not under the civil jurisdiction of the Dukes of Savoy—in the dioceses of Pavia, Aosta, Bobbio, Tortona and Nice.

The extension of the feast in France brought another striking piece of poetic justice, this time to the memory of Pierre d’Arcis. The feast of “The Holy Shroud of the Lord,” with the rank of double major and a splendid liturgy of its own, was celebrated every year on June 20 in the whole diocese of Troyes! At Lirey, where the battle for the survival of this very relic had been fought! In the magnificent cathedral, where Pierre d’Arcis pontificated while he was moving heaven and earth to banish the true Shroud as an imposture and a blasphemy! Now the annual feast united the faithful of his diocese with their Bishop and their priests in public veneration of “The Holy Shroud of the Lord.” It was a graceful amende honorable which showed that the successors of Pierre d’Arcis did not take the memorandum ascribed to him quite as seriously as Chevalier and his followers.



But the ghost of Pierre d'Arcis was not yet laid for good. Chevalier displayed a copy of that dubious document before the world and stirred up such a furor that the feast of the Holy Shroud was quietly dropped in the diocese of Troyes.

Then the exposition of 1931 brought its new revelations and the final confirmation of the authenticity of the Shroud.

In Troyes there was one who knew the situation well—the learned and devoted Vicar General, Mons. Joseph Roserot de Melin. Through his influence the feast was restored, and the Shroud is now definitively vindicated in the diocese that witnessed its darkest hour and its greatest peril.

Pierre d'Arcis can now rest in peace. The document with which his memory is burdened still serves as a weapon in the hands of hostile critics, but it can no longer dim the glory or hinder the ultimate triumph of the Shroud.

Many other Popes took official action in regard to the feast of the Holy Shroud and its liturgy by confirming its institution, by extending it to new territories, by approving the revised text of the Mass and Office, and by granting special indulgences on the occasion of the feast—all in order to foster love of the Divine Redeemer and penance for sin through veneration of the Shroud. Among these Popes were the following: Clement VIII, Paul V, Urban VIII, Innocent X, Alexander VII, Clement IX, Benedict XIII, Clement X, Innocent XI, Alexander VIII, Innocent XII, Clement XI, Innocent XIII, Benedict XIV, Pius VII, Gregory XVI, Pius IX and Pius XI.

## The Passion, the Liturgy and the Shroud

Realize that, by decree of the Holy See, the object of the feast and of the proper Mass and Office is that definite cloth preserved in the Royal Chapel at Turin, declared by so many Popes to be the winding-sheet of Christ with the imprints of His Body, with the marks of His wounds, and with the remnants of His Precious Blood. Realize also that these solemn liturgical honors were obligatory for centuries in the many dioceses where the feast was of precept. They are obligatory also whenever the Mass and Office are prescribed for any day apart from the feast. In the archdiocese of Turin, for example, from some time before 1780 the Mass and Office were prescribed on ten or twelve



days of the year besides the day of the feast. At one time all priests of the Roman rite were obliged to recite the Office of the Holy Shroud on the Friday after the second Sunday of Lent. This remained in force till the liturgical reform of Pius X, when the old ferial Offices of Lent were appropriately restored.

An analysis of this special, solemn liturgy will show what all this means. It is a clear, concrete expression of the belief of the Church in the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin, brought before the faithful in a highly dramatic form and with a phraseology that is as bold and vivid as any private advocate of the Shroud ever dared to use.

The Oration strikes the keynote: "O God, Who didst leave to us the traces of Thy Passion upon the Holy Shroud, in which Thy most sacred Body was wrapped by Joseph when it was taken down from the cross: graciously grant that by Thy Death and Burial we may be brought to the glory of the resurrection. . . ."

An indulgence of 100 days was granted for the private recitation of this prayer by many Popes, among them Innocent XII, Clement XII, Clement XIII, Benedict XIV, Gregory XVI and Pius IX.

In the Mass the Lesson is taken from Isaias: "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bosra, this beautiful one in his robes, walking in the greatness of his strength? I, that speak justice, and am a defender to save. Why then is thy apparel red, and thy garments like theirs that tread in the winepress?" (Is. 63:1-7.)

The Gospel of the Mass is Mark's account of the burial, with its air of urgency and haste because of the imminence of the Sabbath. Joseph can only wrap the wounded, bloodstained body in the linen winding-sheet, unwashed and unanointed. It is all brought into the living present by the Holy Shroud, which the Church is now venerating in her most solemn liturgical act.

The Office is a vivid re-enactment of the drama of the Passion as depicted in the imprints on the Shroud. The action begins with the hymn of First Vespers:

"We unite in celebrating the glory of the sacred Shroud: with joyful song and grateful hearts we revere the certain memorials of our salvation which the venerable winding-sheet keeps ever before our eyes, adorned as it is with the emblems impressed with blood when its folds received the Body of Jesus from the cross.



"The Shroud depicts the tortures which Christ, the Redeemer of the human race, bore in pity for the fall of Adam, and by His death He destroyed death.

"The image shows the side wounded with the spear, the hands and feet pierced by the nails, the members torn by the scourges, the crown fixed upon the head.

"Who that has a heart to feel, can look with dry eyes and without an inner sighing of the spirit upon this manifest, this living portrayal of His undeserved death?"

The Invitatory of Matins again strikes the dominant note: "Come, let us adore Christ the Lord, who through the sacred Shroud keeps fresh the memory of His Passion."

The hymn of Matins boldly represents the Passion as actually taking place, as if it were fixed in an ever-present Now by the imprints of Christ:

"This day a marvelous mystery is unfolded before us: we witness the true Son of God suffering a bloody death.

"Putting on the form of a sinner that He may plead the cause of him who is in bondage, the Master is crucified in place of the servant, the innocent is punished for the guilty.

"The insignia of His death are forever impressed upon the sacred Shroud, which enveloped His bleeding Body after His glorious triumph.

"These are the emblems of His victory over death, over hell, over the world; they are the splendid trophies of our invincible Chief.

"To our conquering Saviour, therefore, we owe this proof of our gratitude, that we battle against the wiles of the Demon under this His ensign."

The antiphons and the Psalms carry the theme onward with the solemn, stately measure of a heavenly chant. The chant pauses while in the Lessons Ambrose and Bede expound the deeper meaning of the burial, and the prophet Isaias voices the sentiments of those who were to see the Saviour in His Passion, and those who were to look upon His imprints on the Shroud:

"There is no beauty in Him, nor comeliness: and we have seen him, and there was no sightliness, that we should be desirous of him: despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity: and his face was as it were hidden and despised,



wherefore we esteemed him not. Truly, he has borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows: and we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed" (Is. 53:1-5).

In the hymn of Lauds the tone becomes tender and compassionate in an outpouring of love. Rev. Edward Caswell, of the Oratory in Birmingham, England, made a translation in meter and rhyme which is rather free, but retains the thought and spirit of the original:

Jesu! as though Thyself wert here,  
I draw in trembling sorrow near;  
And, hanging o'er Thy form divine,  
Kneel down to kiss these wounds of Thine.

Ah me, how naked art Thou laid!  
Bloodstained, distended, cold and dead!  
Joy of my soul—my Saviour sweet,  
Upon this sacred winding-sheet!

Hail, awful brow! hail, thorny wreath!  
Hail, countenance now pale in death!  
Whose glance but late so brightly blazed,  
That angels trembled as they gazed.

And hail to thee, my Saviour's side;  
And hail to thee, thou wound so wide;  
Thou wound more ruddy than the rose,  
True antidote of all our woes!

Oh, by those sacred hands and feet  
For me so mangled! I entreat,  
My Jesu, turn me not away,  
But let me here forever stay.

The sacred drama, which is also exalted prayer, closes with the hymn that formed the opening chorus, binding the whole into a unit that would honor a master dramatist: "We sing the glory of the vener-

able Shroud which bears the certain emblems of our redemption, impressed with the Precious Blood when its folds received the Body of the Saviour from the cross."

These are not the effusions of a sentimental devotee or of an imaginative dreamer. This is the official liturgical text, deliberately chosen by the Holy See to express the spirit of worship with which the Church approaches the Shroud of the Divine Redeemer. The text was prepared with the collaboration of a corps of experts—theologians, liturgists, canonists. The hymns, which are the most characteristic parts, were revised by Card. Bona, a rigorist and a perfectionist where correct liturgical form was concerned. Every phrase of both the Mass and the Office was scrutinized and approved by the Congregation of Rites, a tribunal which is not interested in mere poetry. All was found to be in harmony with sound Theology, with the text of the Gospels, with the tradition of the Church, and with the imprints on the Shroud. And this whole magnificent, soulful liturgy is celebrated every year in hundreds of churches in public homage to the Christ of Calvary, Who remains in our midst as the Christ of the Shroud. Could there be a clearer or a more forceful way of proclaiming that the Shroud of Turin is the sacred ensign which the risen Saviour passed on to the Church, blazoned with the insignia of His triumph and the emblems of our redemption?

### The Popes of Our Own Days

In 1898 the first photograph of the Shroud made its sensational revelation and occasioned a controversy that resounded throughout the Catholic world. Then a change appeared in the attitude of the Holy See towards the Shroud, but it was not the change the opponents hoped for, not the reversal which Chevalier prematurely announced to the world. The Popes reaffirmed the authenticity of the Shroud all the more emphatically as the significance of the new evidence became clearer.

Leo XIII, who had granted special indulgences for the exposition of 1898, afterwards wrote to Card. Richelmy, Archbishop of Turin, to express the consolation he felt over the great number of Catholic men who had come from all parts "to venerate the sacred Shroud of Christ."

The photograph taken by Secondo Pia was presented to Leo XIII. On that occasion Leo declared that this photograph, with its undeniable



revelation of the true likeness of Christ, was a providential event and "a means well adapted in our time to stimulate everywhere a revival of the religious spirit."

The Blessed Pius X approved the Oeuvre Saint Luc, founded by Emmanuel Faure for the sole purpose of promoting veneration of the image of Christ revealed by the photograph of the Shroud. His Holiness called this "the true image of the Holy Shroud," and declared that it can be a very effective aid in meditating on the Passion and Death of the Divine Saviour. He expressed the desire that it be diffused everywhere and that it be held in veneration in all Christian families. To this end he recommended it to all Bishops and Priests and gave a special blessing to all who would propagate the image and cult of the Christ of the Shroud.

Pius X also granted many indulgences to foster this cult. For just a brief recollection of the sufferings of Christ before a reproduction of the image of the Shroud he granted all the indulgences which his predecessors had attached to the Rosary of the Five Wounds.

To those who meditate on the Passion before this image he granted the following indulgences:

**A partial indulgence** of one year once a day.

**A plenary indulgence** on any Friday of the year, the feast of the Finding of the Cross, or on any day during the octave of these feasts.

**A plenary indulgence** on the day of Paschal Communion to those who meditate on the Passion before the image of the Shroud each day from Passion Saturday to Holy Saturday. Also seven years and seven quarantines on each of these days.

**A plenary indulgence** on the feasts of the Nativity, the Circumcision, Epiphany, the Holy Name of Jesus, Easter, the Ascension, the Transfiguration, or on any day during the octave of these feasts.

Benedict XV confirmed all these indulgences on the one condition of meditating on the Passion before the image of the Shroud. Like his saintly predecessor he desired that this image be diffused throughout the world, and that it be venerated in all Christian families.

Pius XI was personally the best qualified of all the Popes who have dealt with the Shroud. As a young priest he was present at the epoch-making exposition of 1898. He was a judicious observer of the controversy that raged over the attack launched by Chevalier in his *Etude Critique*, and over the defense of the Shroud by Vignon and Delage.



He made persistent personal studies and kept abreast of all new developments.

On February 14, 1923, one year after his election to the Papacy, he gave audience to Secondo Pia, who presented him with the photograph of the Shroud and a superb enlargement of the Holy Face. His Holiness discussed the whole photographic argument with the man who understood it best, and listened attentively to all that Pia had to say about his own examination of the Shroud.

In 1931 another epoch-making exposition of the Shroud was held under the Pontificate of Pius XI. In 1933 the last public exposition was held at his own request.

On March 21, 1934, he received Com. Giuseppe Enrie, the official photographer of the Shroud in 1931. The new photographs were presented in the form of diapositives illuminated from the rear. The effect was almost as of a luminous vision of the sacred Body itself. His Holiness showed that he had a firm grasp of the scientific value of these photographs. In fact, he remarked on that occasion that they are worth more than any historical research—a significant statement coming from one who was himself an eminent historian.

In two other audiences Pius XI discussed the results of recent research with two noted sindonologists — Paul Vignon, who devoted much of his scientific career to the study of the Shroud; and Dr. Pierre Barbet, who had made such remarkable anatomical and experimental studies of the five wounds as impressed on the Shroud.

Pius XI, then, could speak of the Shroud with a profound personal knowledge of the actual state of the case, and with the authority of a great scholar experienced in meticulous research and accustomed to the careful weighing of evidence. His utterances on the Shroud remain to embarrass the opponents, who have not been very successful in their efforts to evade the force of his authority.

The first recorded expression of the personal opinion of Pius XI is contained in a letter dated January 15, 1923, which Card. Gasparri wrote at his direction to acknowledge the gift of Malijay's writings in defense of the Shroud: "With all his heart His Holiness congratulates you for having expounded ever more clearly those two august memorials of the great mystery of our Redemption—the Holy Shroud and the Holy Face."

When it was proposed to hold a public exposition of the Shroud in



1931, there were Catholics who protested. Why expose religion to ridicule, they said, and the Church to the attacks of Protestants by displaying an alleged relic of Christ which is at best indefensible for lack of documentary evidence, which in fact has been proved spurious by historical documents of unquestionable authority? It was Chevalier's thesis all over again, accepted so confidently that a group of Catholics drew up a memorial and presented it to Card. Fossati in an attempt to dissuade him from holding the exposition.

The Archbishop of Turin consulted Pius XI in private audience, and His Holiness answered without hesitation: "You may be at peace. We speak now as a scholar and not as Pope. We have made a personal study of the Shroud, and We are convinced of its authenticity. Objections have been made, but they are worthless" (literally, they do not stand up: *non reggono*).

One objection that the Pope meant was certainly Chevalier's historical thesis, of which as a historian he was keenly aware. Another was the scriptural objection, which the opponents had been featuring so prominently. There were no really scientific objections, and none from the history of art.

The exposition was held, and it turned out to be the most important in the history of the Shroud. Pius XI granted special indulgences for veneration of the Shroud on that occasion, and sent two groups of observers to Turin who reported to him personally.

In a radio discourse held on December 24, 1932, and in the Encyclical *Quod Nuper*, January 1, 1933, in which he promulgated the Jubilee in commemoration of the nineteenth centenary of the Redemption through the death of Christ on the cross, Pius XI expressed the desire that the relics of the Passion and death of Christ be publicly exposed to the veneration of the faithful during the Jubilee year. Privately he told Card. Fossati that he had especially the Shroud in mind, and he proposed that His Eminence approach King Vittorio Emanuele and request his consent to a public exposition. It was this desire of Pius XI that was decisive in bringing about the extraordinary exposition of 1933. Again the Pope granted the customary indulgences and sent personal representatives to take part in the exposition.

Pius XI had promised Card. Fossati that he would make a public statement about the Shroud at an opportune moment. The occasion, deliberately chosen, was an audience at Castelgandolfo on September



5, 1936, to three thousand young men of Italian Catholic Action, just returned from a pilgrimage to the shrine of Our Lady of Pompeii. The Pope distributed pictures of the Holy Face as a souvenir of the pilgrimage, and then made this carefully measured statement:

"These are not indeed pictures of Mary Most Holy, but they remind us of her more vividly than any others could because they are pictures of her Divine Son, and for that reason the most suggestive, the most beautiful, the most precious, that one can imagine. They come, in fact, from that object known as the Holy Shroud of Turin—still mysterious, but certainly not the work of any human hand. This, one can now say, is demonstrated."

The Holy Father continued, weighing every word as if he were testifying before a supreme tribunal: "We said mysterious, because that sacred object still involves many problems; but certainly it is more sacred than perhaps any other; and, as is now established in the most positive manner, even apart from all idea of faith and Christian piety, it is certainly not a human work."

Eighteen days later, on September 23, His Holiness expressed his conviction in the same emphatic terms in an allocution to the collaborators of the periodical *La Vie Spirituelle*.

The Pope's personal devotion to the Shroud matched his deep conviction of its authenticity. The picture of the Holy Face was his favorite souvenir to those who came into his presence. He took every opportunity to speak of the wonders of the Shroud, and to exhort to love of the Saviour Who has left us this moving memorial of His sufferings and death. In his latter days, when he was afflicted and exhausted, the thought of the Shroud seemed never to leave his mind.

On February 3, 1939, seven days before his death, he received Card. Villeneuve, Archbishop of Quebec, and several other Bishops of Canada. He gave them pictures of the Holy Face, assuring them that they represent the true likeness of Christ, and he explained how the diffusion of the imprint lends a singular force to the expression of the face.

On February 6, when he was almost face to face with death, he received a group of children—the last audience of his glorious Pontificate. With the photograph of the Holy Shroud in his hand, that Pontiff of heroic achievements, that scholar of immense erudition, explained in words that the children could understand that this was the true



image of the Holy Face of the Redeemer, brought to us by the Shroud of Turin. And this picture of the entire figure of the Saviour—how beautiful it is! How it speaks to the heart through all these marks of His sufferings and His death!

Pius XI died four days later, on February 10, 1939. He had prepared for that moment by meditating on the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ from the sacred scroll of the Shroud.

I said that efforts have been made to discredit what Pius XI said about the Shroud of Turin, especially his public statement at Castelgandolfo. It is only a personal opinion, say the critics, not an official judgment of the Church—the same evasion that Chevalier attempted in regard to Benedict XIV. They might at least admit that it is the mature judgment of a competent scholar who was completely conversant with the subject. And he spoke with full realization of the import of his words and of the impact they would have on public opinion and the attitude of the faithful. Why should he be thrust aside in such cavalier fashion? And why prefer opponents of the past, misinformed in their time and not even aware of the present state of the case? Perhaps the critics do not realize it, but they imply that Pius XI was stupid—or worse. For that matter, is there one among them who has the intellectual stature of Achille Ratti, and who has made the same conscientious study of the whole question?

The critics say that there is no act of Pius XI which represents the official judgment of the Church. They are mistaken. There are the indulgences that he granted on occasion of the two public expositions held under his Pontificate. These were official grants of spiritual benefits for veneration of the Shroud of Turin as the true winding-sheet of Christ. They imply an official recognition of its authenticity. But there is something more definite.

In the Archives of the Royal Chapel at Turin there is the original parchment of a Brief dated March 23, 1934, in which Pius IX, after consultation with the Cardinal Penitentiary, indulgenced a prayer addressed to the Christ of the Shroud. He granted a plenary indulgence that can be gained three times in the year for recitation of the prayer before the Shroud in the Royal Chapel or before a picture of it anywhere. The conditions are Confession, Communion and prayers for the intention of the Holy Father. He also granted a partial indulgence of



500 days each time the Shroud prayer is recited at least with contrite heart. These indulgences are to remain in force for all future time.

The prayer is incorporated in the text of the Brief and reads as follows:

O Lord, Who in the most Holy Shroud, which enfolded Thy adorable Body on being taken down from the Cross, hast left manifestations of Thy presence here below and evident tokens of Thy love, by the merits of Thy holy passion and out of regard for this venerable linen which served for Thy burial, mercifully grant, we beseech Thee, that in the resurrection we also may share in that glory, in which Thou shalt reign for all eternity. Amen.

Here is an act that is fully official. It is an unusually generous grant from the spiritual treasury of the Church by Pius XI acting by virtue of his supreme authority as the Vicar of Christ. If anything, the terms of the prayer are more explicit than the public statement at Castelgandolfo. Here the Pope declares that the Shroud of Turin is the linen cloth in which the Body of Christ was wrapped when it was taken down from the cross, the cloth in which Christ was buried, and upon which He left traces of His presence on earth and manifest tokens of His love. *This* is the judgment of the Church expressed by Pius XI, confirming the official pronouncements of so many of his predecessors. And it has a special significance, for it comes from the Pope who witnessed the discovery of all the new evidence, the validity of which he himself verified, and which he publicly declared to be conclusive, "even apart from all idea of faith and Christian piety."

That Brief is signed by the then Secretary of State, Card. Eugenio Pacelli, now gloriously reigning as Pius XII. He, too, has joined his voice with the chorus of Pontiffs who have proclaimed the authenticity of the Shroud of Turin. In reply to the filial homage of the international congress of sindonological studies held in Rome in 1950, he referred to the Shroud as "a glorious witness to the Passion of the Divine Redeemer," and he augured a new and valuable contribution by the congress which would foster "universal veneration of that great relic."



On September 13, 1953, in a radio address to the National Eucharistic Congress held at Turin, Pius XII numbered among the glories of that city the fact that "it guards as a precious treasure the Holy Shroud, upon which we behold with deep emotion and solace the image of the lifeless body and the broken divine countenance of Jesus."

## Conclusion

Ensign of Christ—the Shroud of Turin confronts the world today like a victorious banner with its stupendous claims completely vindicated. The imprints that it bears are an irrefutable proof of its genuineness, corroborated by the Gospels and endorsed by the Church. This is really the testimony of Christ Himself, traced with the marks of His wounds, signed and sealed with His Blood, illustrated with His portrait, ratified by His Vicars. In the mouth of two or three witnesses—and such witnesses!—every word shall stand.

Sign of Contradiction—the Shroud is bound to arouse opposition by its very claims, and by the nature of the evidence by which those claims are verified. Academic circles especially are not very hospitable to a relic which comes out of the dim past without its written authentication, least of all if it is proposed as a relic of Christ. The imprints of the dead Saviour? Wishful thinking which cannot supply for the indispensable documents. For such skeptics, the mere fact that documents to the contrary have been produced, is sufficient to convict the Shroud as an imposture.

There is no question of faith involved, but through those sacred imprints the Shroud is so intimately related to Christ that one can hardly be neutral about it. "He that is not with Me, is against Me"—the issue so sharply drawn by Christ is presented in some measure by this challenging replica of Himself as He was at the end of His redeeming sacrifice.

The opponents themselves, however, unwittingly bear witness to the genuineness of the Shroud by the futility of their arguments, which, in the phrase of Pius XI, "do not stand up" in the light of the evidence resplendant upon the Shroud. The opponents can only repeat old fallacies and, in their misconception of the true state of the case, demand a documentary history of the Shroud. It is as if some literal-minded official were to deny entrance to Christ because He cannot

produce a legal document of identity, although His identity is luminously clear from the wounds which are His personal insignia, and from the noble, sorrowful countenance which, though fully human, bears the impress of His Divinity.



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## For Further Reading

**THE HOLY SHROUD** by Edward A. Wuenschel, C.S.S.R., S.T.D.,  
64 pages, 25c

This is a pamphlet edition of the first eight chapters of **SELF-PORTRAIT OF CHRIST**. The pamphlet contains the positive statement of the case for authenticity of the Holy Shroud.

**THE SHROUD OF TURIN AND THE BURIAL OF CHRIST** by  
Edward A. Wuenschel, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., 84 pages, 60c.

Reprint of two articles from *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*. It is a scholarly and documented study of the imprints on the Holy Shroud and the Gospel narratives of the burial of Christ. Father Wuenschel points out that the imprints do not contradict the scriptural account of the burial but rather confirm and supplement it.

**THE TRUTH ABOUT THE HOLY SHROUD** by Edward A.  
Wuenschel, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., 51 pages, 60c.

Reprint of three articles from *The American Ecclesiastical Review*. These articles were occasioned by the publication of Dr. Hynek's book, **THE TRUE LIKENESS** in 1951. Father Wuenschel evaluates Dr. Hynek's theories and presents new data about the Holy Shroud.

**THE DEATH IMAGE OF CHRIST** by W. V. McEvoy, O.P.  
96 pages, 60c

Father McEvoy presents the story of the Holy Shroud and then studies in detail the sufferings of the Passion as they are portrayed on the Holy Shroud. Father McEvoy's study of the Passion is based on the work of Dr. Barbet.

**I SAW THE HOLY SHROUD** by Peter M. Rinaldi, S.D.B.,  
68 pages, 50c

Father Rinaldi was an eye-witness at the exposition of the Holy Shroud in 1933. He was privileged to examine the Holy Shroud and was present at the discussion of the scholars. Father Rinaldi considers many questions and objections which are frequently raised.

**A SCULPTOR INTERPRETS THE HOLY SHROUD OF TURIN**  
by Peter Weyland, S.V.D. (*in preparation*).

Father Weyland has made a detailed study of the imprints on the Holy Shroud and has modelled a crucifix according to the information derived from the Holy Shroud. A photograph of Father Weyland's crucifix appears in this book. He is preparing a pamphlet which will describe his experiments and study.

**THE HOLY SHROUD OF TURIN** (Film-strip) with Explanatory Notes  
by Adam J. Otterbein, C.S.S.R., 38 frames, \$2.00

The Notes contain a general introduction, which presents the story of the Holy Shroud and outlines the argument for its authenticity. There is also a brief explanation of the individual frames. The film-strip makes it possible to study the images in life-size.

**HOLY SHROUD GUILD**  
**Esopus, N. Y.**